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THE LEGEND OF HELL

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ETC.

I.—A Damned Woman carried off by a Devil

By Signorelli

THE LEGEND OF HELL

AN EXAMINATION OF THE IDEA OF EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

WITH A CHAPTER ON APOCALYPTIC

BY

PERCY DEARMER, D.D.

PROFESSOR & FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON

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PREFACE

When I was in France during the War, I used to ask the men to put questions in a box. The question most frequently asked was, "How can a just God send people to everlasting torment?" Since then, I have found that, whenever questions were invited at large popular meetings, this was the difficulty in most people's minds. There is therefore a real need for such a book as this. Scholars also may find something of interest in the discussion on Apocalyptic: they will, I hope, forgive my telling them of matters which they know already; and the ordinary reader is asked to be tolerant if he finds arguments and references which seem to be more for the student than for himself.

P. D.

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[1] It seems our duty to give the reader one example of this bestial type of illustration. There is one for every day in the week in the book:—*Mon.* " The Fire. My inner Parts have boyled without any Rest. Job. 30 : 27." *Tues.* " The Company, . . . I was the Brother of Dragons, and Fellow of Ostriches. Job. 30 : 29." *Wed.* " The Pain of Loss." *Thurs.* " The Sting of Conscience." *Fri.* " Despair." *Sat.* " Eternity of Pain."

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THE LEGEND OF HELL

CHAPTER I

THE DOCTRINES OF HELL AND OF PURGATORY

I. Introduction

WHEN Dr. Johnson towards the end of his life was visiting his old friend, Dr. Adams, the Master of Pembroke College, he expressed a fear that he might be "one of those who shall be damned"; and when the amiable and philosophical Master said,

"What do you mean by damned?" Dr. Johnson 'passionately and loudly' gave vent to the terror which always haunted him, by replying, "Sent to Hell, Sir, and punished everlastingly." [1]

This was the plain orthodox view in the eighteenth century, as it had been in the Middle Ages, and in the Dark Ages before them. To be damned was to be sent to hell, and to be in hell was to exist in unspeakable torments which would never come to an end. It is true that the words for 'hell' and 'damnation' do not really mean this in the original Greek; but this was the meaning that had long ago been fastened upon them, and the meaning they bear in plain English to-day; and therefore they will be used in this sense in the pages which follow.

The object of our present enquiry is not so much to refute a doctrine which in its barbarity needs little further disproof for the educated world of the present age, but rather to help clear away the taint of it which still hangs in the air, and still poisons many a conservative pulpit; and to do something towards removing the prejudice against Christianity which pervades large sections of people, especially on the Continent of Europe, because of that doctrine. Most of all, if it be not presumptuous, I would desire to make it clear to those who may read these pages that the charge of having fathered such a doctrine can no longer be brought against the Saviour of mankind.

Throughout this book the word 'hell' will be used in its plain meaning as a place of everlasting punishment, and no attempt will be made to give it a new sig

[1] See below, pp. 115–6. J. Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, ca[1]
55.

nification by saying that it only represents the ruin of character in certain persons. The fact that human personality can be ruined is a terrible thing ; but it is not the doctrine of hell. Before the problem of the origin and ultimate destiny of evil we shall here be content with a silence, only broken by the assertion that God is stronger than evil. So far as we can dare to judge others at all—and our Master has warned us not to make the attempt—it may seem that the ruin of human personality is possible, and that many pass into the Beyond without having profited by the experience of this mortal life, the problems of which can only be accounted for by assuming that it is a school for the immortal spirits who pass through it. Some seem to us never to rise out of the infants' class and to have lost all their innocence without learning any of their lessons ; and there are some who, we think, have become entirely loathsome. If we had to point them out, we should probably find that we had chosen wrong, and perhaps that those whom we considered outcast and sinners above all others were like the folk in whom Christ found more good than among some highly respected classes. We do not know.

We think of human ruin ; we ask ourselves perhaps whether some people may not destroy their souls, so that there is nothing left to survive ; and then we remember that there are creatures born into the world without intelligence at all, and some that are only in part human. What made them thus ? Where is the responsibility ? And if they are wastage of the creative Spirit, will that Spirit remake them, or will the scraps disappear into the melting-pot to be put to other use ? We have no answer to such problems of

apparent failure, because we do not know. But we are sure that hell is no answer at all. And, since we are Christians, we are content to leave it all to the infinite Wisdom which has power to remake what was ill made, if this be for the best, and has love sufficient to re-form what has formed itself amiss.

The doctrine of hell is not the simple truth that terrible results follow from evil-doing, that sin brings misery in its train ; or that discipline is necessary in this life, which is the only life of which we know the conditions, and that, lovingly administered, it has good effects. Punishment cannot be an adequate word for the divine treatment of wrong-doers ; but to believe even in a crude form of future punishment is not necessarily to believe in hell. We may indeed temerariously estimate that most men when they die are unfit to go ' straight to heaven,' without therefore believing in either hell or purgatory. Nor does the conviction that there will be an adjustment in another world of this life's inequalities involve a belief in hell.

Such matters are not the subject of this book ; nor am I concerned with speculations on the methods of the divine justice and love in the life beyond. But I wish to state clearly at the outset that such theories of the working of the moral law are not the doctrine of eternal punishment ; that to use the word ' hell ' for the condition which a man makes for himself, for the blindness, bitterness, and shame from which he can escape by repentance, is to play with words and to employ ' hell ' in a sense which in all its vicissitudes it has never borne. Such a use is only justifiable in poetry or metaphor, as when Sir Thomas Browne says, " The heart of man is the place the Devils dwell

in: I feel sometimes a Hell within myself; Lucifer keeps his Court in my breast, Legion is revived in me" [1]—admirably put; and the word 'hell' will always supply a valuable metaphor (and an expletive), but this is not its meaning in theology.

Hell, in the language of theology and of common speech alike, is not a condition that man makes for himself, but a place which God has prepared for him; neither is it a condition from which he can escape by repentance, but one from which there is no escape, since he is sent there for ever. People who believe in hell may reduce the number of its victims, they may lower by a few hundred degrees the temperature of its flame—or even, greatly venturing, may aver that the fire is 'spiritual' (as if that made it of no account); but they cannot make hell other than a place—or at best, a condition—of everlasting punishment. Nor can they, unless they are Anglicans [2] or Protestants of the modern type, empty their hell of those who are unbaptised, including all the virtuous heathen who have ever lived, though they may hope for some mitigation in the best cases. In fact, if they believe in hell, they must, with whatever modifications and modernisations, believe in the essentials of the doctrine. This doctrine is that God, by his inscrutable decree, has created countless millions whom he knew to be destined to endless agony; that he has also placed most men in such environments that this fate has been inevitable and will continue so to be, indefinitely; and that he has carefully devised means for the torment of all these unfortunates, whose lives he will prolong for ever in

[1] *Religio Medici*, Dent's ed., 1896, p. 76.
[2] For the position of the Church of England see below, p. 105.

order that they may be for ever miserable. In these words I am summarising the accepted definitions ; and I would beg all whose consciences are revolted by such a conception not to say that they believe in hell.

For all the detergents of the universe cannot disinfect that word. The whole conception is wicked, shocking, and monstrous ; and not a splinter of its nauseous wreckage can be retained. To endeavour to spiritualise it, in the desire to justify the brutalised conceptions of a discredited dogmatic, is to put ourselves again on the side of Moloch ; for, less coarse than the older Tophet, a spiritualised hell would be more devilishly cruel, under such refined management as an almighty Tormentor must be expected to provide. To that we will return ; but the official definitions will demand our consideration first.

II. The Doctrine of Hell

Now the doctrine of hell is not dead. Softened—or rather, obscured, since nothing can really soften the prospect of endless misery—it is still held and taught by large numbers of people, loosely, it may be, and illogically, half shamefacedly and half defiantly, sometimes with a slap at the levity of the age, sometimes with a sneer at its humanity. If the inseparable horrors are ignored and the implications evaded by the more polished, and hell is sublimated into the anguish created by God's anger and the sinner's hopeless remorse, it remains for all who accept it an actual fact of endless agony.

The doctrine of hell is not dead. It is to-day taught to two or three hundred millions of people. Half a century ago it was, even in England, the general

orthodox teaching, opposition to which provoked a fury of opposition; it was "a doctrine which the present generation has been taught to regard as a fundamental part of Christianity itself," it was "the approved teaching of Christendom."[1] The older generation in England to-day was in large part brought up in it; and many find it hard to shake off the traces of this conception of vengeance and wrath, or, it may be, to escape from their first reaction of bitter secularism. Hell still lurks in the background of much religious teaching, and is the unmentioned foundation upon which very wide-spread practices and accepted theories rest. The appeal of the hell doctrine is still strong, because the idea of the gods as tormentors is very ancient; and, when all is placid on the surface, the atavisms are apt to surge up—cruelty, vengeance, retaliation—whether in the violence of children, the madness of war, or the clamour of religious fanaticism.

The doctrine of hell is not dead. Man's conception of God as the celestial counterpart to the bloodthirsty tyrants who once ruled him was too deep-grained to pass away in a few centuries; and the ancient Potentate of anger and revenge has not yet abdicated before the God who is love; he still dominates over vast tracts of the world's surface, and cries "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"—or, infinitely worse, he demands an infinite anguish for a finite offence, or for a trivial fault, or for an error in theology. Even in England he has not yet been openly renounced, but still lurks in the sanctuaries of our worship. The

[1] A Clergyman, *Forgiveness after Death*, Longmans, 1862, p. 4. Andrew Jukes, *The Second Death*, Longmans, 1867, 3rd ed., 1873, p. 26.

inconsistent and grotesque eschatology is to this day proclaimed with all the emphasis of bad verse in the choir-stalls of St. Paul's Cathedral, under the very eyes of its distinguished Dean :—

mf Days and moments quickly flying
Blend the living with the dead ;
p Soon will you and I be lying
Each within our narrow bed. . . .

Whence we came, and whither wending ;
p Soon we must through darkness go,
f To inherit bliss unending,
p Or eternity of woe.

Or this,—with flames *mezzo forte* :—

Lord, give us grace to flee from sin,
And Satan's wiles ensnaring,
And from those everlasting flames
For evil ones preparing.

While more succinct information is sometimes given us, *piano* :—

Hell.
p From the awful place of doom,
Where in rayless outer gloom
Dead souls lie as in a tomb,
Save us, Holy Jesu.

From the black, the dull despair
Ruin'd men and angels share,
From the dread companions there,
Save us, Holy Jesu.

From the unknown agonies
Of the soul that helpless lies,
From the worm that never dies,
Save us, Holy Jesu.

From the lusts that none can tame,
From the fierce mysterious flame,
From the everlasting shame
Save us, Holy Jesu.[1]

[1] *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 289, 104, 463. Doubtless these lucubrations are no longer sung under the present Dean, but only read sometimes by the choir during the sermon.

Moreover it is a mistake to think that the doctrine of endless torment is held only by those who are called Fundamentalists: it is the official doctrine of the larger part of Christendom to-day; for the Roman Catholic Church is unfortunately pledged to fundamentalism in this as in the other main aspects of theology; and she cannot extricate herself until she has renounced her claims to infallibility. Protestant teaching, though it has often been as definite, matters much less, because Protestantism has not placed itself beyond correction and development; and the educated Protestant world has already repudiated the idea of eternal damnation: but we should be living in a fool's paradise if we thought that the Roman Catholic Church can renounce the dogmas with whose maintenance, unaltered, her very existence is bound up. Nor is there any sign of an approach to such a revolutionary idea. On the contrary, the *Summa* of Aquinas is more than ever the text-book of Roman theology at the present day, since Leo XIII ordered it to be taken as the standard in all theological seminaries; and there can be unfortunately little hope of the definite statements in the *Summa* concerning hell and purgatory being discarded. Even if there were, the Council of Trent would still remain an insurmountable obstacle to change.

The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent are binding upon Roman Catholics as œcumenical decrees; and it is difficult to see how even the Catechism of that Council could conceivably be ignored, were there ever any desire to do so. The Canons and Decrees do not indeed deal directly with hell, since they are concerned with the defence of controverted doctrines,

and the reform of abuses; but their references to eternal punishment, though incidental, do not seem to admit of any evasion, while purgatory, because it had been attacked, is directly dealt with, in unmistakable though studiously moderate language :—

That there is a purgatory, and that the souls of the faithful are helped [*juvari*, relieved] by the suffrages of the faithful, but principally by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar; the holy Synod enjoins on bishops that they diligently endeavour that the sound doctrine concerning purgatory, transmitted by the Holy Fathers and sacred synods, be believed, maintained, taught, and everywhere proclaimed by the faithful of Christ.[1]

It would be good for the Church if this statement could be made to cover something more tolerable than what is popularly meant by future punishment; but there is no doubt as to what the 'sound doctrine' is. The *Catechismus Romanus* was ordered by the Council of Trent in its 24th session (1563) to be produced as a manual of instruction, and was issued in 1564, with stringent orders to all bishops and parish priests to teach its doctrine, orders which still bind them to-day. Besides the fire of purgatory for good men, which we shall mention below in its place, there is—

That most loathsome and dark prison, in which the souls of the damned together with the unclean spirits are tortured in everlasting and inextinguishable fire.

[1] *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent*, tr. J. Waterworth, Dolman, 1848, session 25 (pp. 232–3). Eternal punishment is mentioned and taken for granted in session 6, cap. 12, canons 25, 30; session 14, canon 15 (pp. 41, 47, 48, 110).

This place is also called Gehenna, the bottomless pit, and in its literal signification, hell.[1]

In the chapter on the seventh article of the Creed this is elaborated. The ' pain of loss ' is there stated to be worse than the physical torment (the ' pain of sense '), for it is the ' heaviest punishment ' of all. The physical pain is thus described :—

The divine justice will most deservedly pursue them, when banished, with every malediction. The words, ' into everlasting fire,' which follow next, express another sort of punishment, called by Divines ' the pain of sense ' ; because, like stripes and flagellations, or other severer sort of punishments, amongst which doubtless the tortures of fire produce the most intense feeling of pain, it is felt through the organs of sense. When to this evil is added, that it is to last for ever, by this it is shown that the sufferings of the damned will comprise an accumulation of all punishments. . . . These are matters which pastors should very frequently press upon the attention of the faithful.[2]

" An accumulation of all punishments." Certainly the limit is here reached, and no loophole is left. The most outrageous statements of preachers do not go beyond what is here required of them.

The Tridentine hell can indeed only be abated by reducing the number of its victims. By the charitable theory of ' invincible ignorance ' many heretics may be excluded from final damnation, though not from

[1] " Est enim teterrimus et obscurissimus carcer, ubi perpetuo et inexstinguibili igne damnatorum animæ . . . torquentur." *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, tr. J. Donovan, revised ed., Dolman, 1854, Part I, art. v, p. 59.

[2] Donovan's translation of the *Catechism*, as above, 1854 ed. Part I, art. viii. The earliest edition (1829) translates less accurately.

the torments of purgatory. " Those who live under invincible ignorance . . . " said Pope Pius IX, in an encyclical of 1863, " and who, diligently observing the natural law and its precepts, which are engraven by God on the hearts of all, and prepared to obey God, lead a good and upright life, are able, by the operation of the power of divine light and grace, to obtain eternal life " ; and that Pope had already in an allocution of 1854 repudiated the attempt to set any limit to the cases in which this plea of ignorance is admissible.[1] This is a welcome advance ; but it does not go so far as might appear at first sight.

In the first place, the phrase ' invincible ignorance ' cannot in reason be applied to the most important class of all, those unorthodox people of high intellectual endowment and moral character who have devoted their lives to the search for truth. In the second place, ' invincible ignorance ' does not relieve the snatched brand from the torments of purgatory, which even for Catholics are declared to be protracted and inconceivably severe. Thirdly, the theory of ' invincible ignorance ' only applies to those who have been baptised : all others, whether they be infants, Quakers, Salvationists, or non-Christians, are outside the scope of the doctrine, and must be damned. It would thus seem that ' invincible ignorance ' has been invented more for the relief of troubled consciences and the assistance of apologists than for any other purpose ; though we must be glad that all the relief possible has been given.

In the case of babies who have not been christened,

[1] J. H. Newman, *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, London, 1875, p. 123.

many efforts have been made to mitigate the logic of Augustine's alternative that those who do not go to heaven must go to hell: he himself taught that theirs is a *mitissima damnatio*, though a damnation none the less. We shall have to return to this again, as also to the fate of the virtuous heathen, for whom the fate once confidently predicted has become, through the progress of civilisation, intolerable to any reasonable mind. Such merciful evasions may reduce the 'ten thousand to one' proportion of the actually tortured; but they offer no relief for those who have not diligently observed 'the natural law.' They leave, as they were bound to leave, the doctrine of the Councils of Florence and Trent unaltered, for every Roman Catholic is bound to accept these councils.[1] All that could be done by way of mitigation of the fate of the unbaptised has been done, and the gross idea, once universal, that pious Christians who hold unauthorised theological opinions will suffer everlasting agony has been reduced; but however much good men may hope and propagandists may conceal, the doctrine of eternal punishment remains adamant; and we have to face it. The Legend of Hell is not a thing of the past, since the majority of professing Christians are bound to accept and defend it to-day.

Protestant definitions, on the other hand, would have little more than a historical interest if their effects were obliterated, which unfortunately they are not. The

[1] "I receive and profess unhesitatingly all other things handed down, defined and declared by the sacred canons and œcumenical councils, and especially by the sacred Synod of Trent; and at the same time I equally condemn, reject and anathematise all things contrary," says the profession of faith required of converts—the Creed of Pope Pius IV. See the *Catholic Encyclopædia*, New York and London, XII, 129c.

old uncompromising dogmas linger only among uneducated people and in remote districts, except in some parts of Holland and America, where they may be nominally accepted because Fundamentalism has been entrenched by rich men in the past. It is certain, for instance, that Scotsmen do not nowadays regard themselves as bound by the Larger Catechism unless at least they live within the circle of the ' Wee Frees.'

Since, however, the object of this section is to record authoritative definition, let us set down a few important statements.

Lutheranism affirmed the doctrine of everlasting punishment in the 17th article of the Confession of Augsburg in 1530 :—

In the consummation of the world Christ shall appear to judge, and shall raise up all the dead, and shall give unto the godly and elect eternal life, and everlasting joys ; but ungodly men and the devils shall he condemn unto endless torments.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who think that to condemned men and to devils shall be an end of torments.[1]

The Calvinist Synod of Dort, 1619, defined the effect of original sin in its 15th canon :—

We believe that through the disobedience of Adam the Original Sin has spread itself over all Mankind . . . wherewith all Infants are infected . . . so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind . . . yet it [sin] is not imputed

[1] *The Augsburg Confession*, literally translated from the Latin by C. P. Krauth, Philadelphia, Evangelical Lutheran Church Book Society, 1868, p. 23.

the children of God [i.e. the elect] unto damnation, but by his grace and mercy it is forgiven them.[1]

The Westminster Confession, issued in 1646 by the Westminster Assembly, is reckoned the best, as it is the most famous, of the Calvinistic confessions. It sums up the doctrine of election tersely and completely thus :—

By the decree of God, for the Manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto Everlasting Life, and others foreordained unto everlasting death.[2]

Of the heathen and the non-elect the Confession, echoing Augustine, says (without irony) that they are to be damned to the praise of God's justice, and that it is very pernicious to assert that they can be saved.

The rest of mankind, God was pleased . . . to pass by and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

Others not elected . . . cannot be saved : much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, . . . and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.[3]

In the Larger Catechism, drawn up by the Westminster Assembly, and received as authoritative by the Presbyterian Church, the full immorality of the doctrine is revealed :—

They who, having never heard the Gospel, know not

[1] *Synod of Dort : Confession of Faith*, tr. M. C. Coorne, English Church at Middelburg, 1721, p. 38.

[2] *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1687 and 1877 eds., cap. 3, art. 3.

[3] *Ibid.*, cap. 3, sec. 7, and cap. 10, sec. 4.

Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature or the law of that religion which they profess.[1]

Which looks like an almost direct contradiction of St. Peter's words in Acts 10 : 34, " Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." As for what the results of not being saved are, two answers are devoted to making them quite clear :—

The punishments of sin in the world to come are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous Torments in soul and body, without intermission, in Hell-fire for ever.

The wicked . . . shall have the fearful but just condemnation pronounced upon them : and thereupon shall be cast out . . . into hell, to be punished with unspeakable torments, both of body and soul, with the devil and his angels for ever.[2]

The Westminster Confession was adopted not only by the Scottish Church, but also by the Long Parliament, the Welsh Methodists, and the Baptists. Readers of R. L. Stevenson will remember how many of his generation were still brought up on it. The Baptists afterwards, in 1677, drew up a Confession of their own, which was adopted by the General Assembly in London, in 1689, and was still current in the middle of the nineteenth century. In this it is stated that the wicked, after death, are " cast into hell ; where they

[1] *The Larger Catechism. Westminster Assembly*, Johnstone Hunter, Edinburgh, 1865, ans. 60, p. 125.
[2] *The Larger Catechism*, ans. 29, and ans. 89.

emain in torment and utter darkness," and, after the Judgment, " shall be cast into everlasting torments, nd punished with everlasting destruction." [1]

True, such official statements as these have been now n the main discarded ; but they have not always been fficially repudiated, or denounced for the shame they ave brought upon the religion of Christ ; and it is a ittle naïve of us to-day to be surprised and pained by he large amount of antagonism to the Christianity of he Churches which has existed for the last hundred ears.

Still, Protestantism, not having committed the rowning error of declaring itself infallible, is capable f free development, and such dogmas have really een consigned to oblivion. An example of the process ay be found in the Wesleyan Methodist *New Cate-hism* of 1925, where a very liberal passage takes the lace of the following, which is almost exactly a hundred ears earlier :—

Vhat sort of place is hell ?
A dark and bottomless pit, full of fire and brimstone.
Iow will the wicked be punished there ?
Their bodies will be tormented with fire, and their souls by a sense of the wrath of God.
Iow long will their torments last ?
The torments of hell will last for ever and ever.[2]

Similarly I notice that in the *Methodist School ymnal* now in use, the section of the Future Life con-sts entirely of hymns about heaven, as do other ildren's books of the present day ; and that none, so

[1] *A Confession of Faith*, etc., London, 1677 ; last edition, ed. H. Spurgeon, London, 1855.
[2] *Wesleyan Methodist Catechism*, 1823, Part I, for Children of nder Years.

far as I know, contain the lines upon which children were commonly brought up a century ago :—

There is a dreadful hell,
And everlasting pains,
There sinners must with devils dwell
In darkness, fire, and chains.

Can such a wretch as I
Escape this cursèd end ?
And may I hope, when'er I die,
I shall to heaven ascend ? [1]

Yet the good Dr. Watts, ' the flower of Nonconformist orthodoxy,' seems here to be merely following the old error of trying to frighten people ; for he himself stated that he believed that " a God of perfect equity and rich mercy . . . will contrive a way to escape." [2]

In our present age the Salvation Army has the reputation of making a great deal of hell. General Booth certainly did so : " Send me some bare thoughts," he wrote to the future Mrs. Booth in 1854, " some clear startling outlines. Nothing moves the people like the terrific. They must have hell-fire flashed before their faces, or they will not *move*." [3] Later, in his official *Doctrine and Discipline*, he repudiated the cruder Calvinism ; but, answering the question—" First, this teaching is opposed to what we know of the love of God. How could it be said that God loves the world, or that God is love at all, if he sends men to suffer in hell for ever, without the possibility of being saved ? "—he said, " Do you believe in Hell ? "—

[1] *The Poetical Works of Isaac Watts, D.D.*, London, Cooke' edition, 1801, p. 218.

[2] F. W. Farrar quotes three instances to this effect in *Merc and Judgment*, Macmillan, 1894 ed., pp. 30, 276, 401.

[3] H. Begbie, *Life of William Booth*, Macmillan, 1920, vol. p. 228.

Yes, all the time;" and he proceeded to defend eternal punishment.[1] A new era seems however to have begun for this great movement.

III. Hell as a Joyful Spectacle

The passage in Tertullian's *De Spectaculis* about the joy of the blessed at the contemplation of the torments of the lost is well known through Gibbon's quotation, and we will give it here. But it is quite unique at this early period (*c.* A.D. 200): there is nothing like it, so far as I have discovered, in the Fathers; and it must be remembered that Tertullian's ferocious puritanism caused him to join the Montanist sect: the Great Church is therefore not to be held responsible for him; and his brilliant rhetoric is important only because it shows that the belief in hell-fire was even then established, and also because it poisoned the minds of later writers:—

"You are fond of spectacles," exclaims the stern Tertullian, "expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs, and fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquifying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red-hot flames with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ; so many tragedians, more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers"—But the humanity of the reader will

[1] W. Booth, *Doctrine and Discipline of the Salvation Army*, London Headquarters, 1881, sec. vii, cf. sec. xxiv.

permit me to draw a veil over the rest of this infernal description, which the zealous African pursues in a long variety of affected and unfeeling witticisms.[1]

Tertullian had some excuse for such tirades in that he lived in an age of persecution, when it needed the very spirit of Christ not to cry for vengeance ; but there was none for Peter Lombard, the famous Master of the Sentences, writing in the twelfth century, when the power of the Church was unquestioned and supreme :—

Therefore the elect shall go forth . . . to see the torments of the impious, and seeing this they will not be affected with grief, but will be satiated with joy at the sight of the unutterable calamity of the impious.[2]

This was a commonplace of medieval thought, and is stated by Vincent of Beauvais, among others, and Hugh of St. Victor, Humbert de St. Romans, the greatest head of the Dominican Order in the thirteenth century, gives three reasons for this joy :—

First, seeing that they themselves have escaped it, secondly, seeing that their enemies will there be tortured ; and thirdly, seeing that sin, which hath done most harm to men, will be shut up in hell as in its own place.[3]

Thomas Aquinas gave permanent expression to the abominable idea in his restrained and accurate way :—

That the saints may enjoy their beatitude more thoroughly, and give more abundant thanks for it to

[1] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 1781, vol. ii, C. 15 ; from the *De Spectaculis*, 30. Gibbon's great book must have done much to make the educated world rethink their ideas about hell.

[2] Peter Lombard, *Sententiæ*, lib. iv, dist. 50, § 7.

[3] Humbert de St. Romans, *De Eruditione Prædicatorum*, in *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, Lyons, 1677, vol. xxv, p. 733.

God, a perfect view of the punishment of the damned is granted them.[1]

The whole passage is a long one: in art. 2 Aquinas discusses the question of pity, and concludes, "Therefore the blessed in glory will have no pity on the damned"; in art. 3, he discusses the nature of the rejoicing, and concludes, "A thing may be a matter of rejoicing in two ways—

First directly, when one rejoices in a thing as such: and *in this way* the saints will not rejoice in the punishment of the wicked. Secondly, indirectly, by reason namely of something annexed to it: and in this way the saints will rejoice in the punishment of the wicked, by considering therein the order of Divine justice and their own deliverance, which will fill them with joy. And thus the Divine justice and their own deliverance will be the direct cause of the joy of the blessed: while the punishment of the damned will cause it indirectly."[2]

The seriousness of this last is that Aquinas' *Summa* is the standard text-book of theology for the largest section of Christendom at the present day; whereas the eighteenth-century New Englander, Jonathan Edwards, who said the same thing, has presumably no responsible followers now,—nor another once-famous American divine, Samuel Hopkins, who said that, if the fires of eternal punishment were to cease, "it

[1] *Summa*, Pars III, Supplementum, q. 94, art. 1 (vol. v, in Rome 1894 ed.).

[2] As there was some discussion in the press about this passage early in 1929, I give the Dominican translation, but with the above alteration of "and *thus* the saints will not rejoice," etc., because "thus" does not clearly reproduce the original, which is "sic" (not "ergo"), and answers to his "alio modo" in the next sentence. The facts are given in a pamphlet by Dr. G. G. Coulton, *St. Thomas Aquinas on the Elect and the Reprobate*, The Faith Press, 1929.

would in a great measure obscure the light of heaven, and put an end to great part of the happiness and glory of the blessed, and be an irreparable detriment to God's eternal kingdom." [1]

IV. Pictures of Hell

It would be easy to fill a book with the evil imaginings about hell; for the ancient writers abound in hideous descriptions—nor does the reader need reminding that two-thirds of the greatest poem of the Middle Ages is devoted to the fables of purgatory and hell, though Dante treats the subject so nobly, and so diverts the interest, that the horror is almost forgotten. But the subject is not a pleasant one; and here we will be content with a few examples which are of special interest because they have been revived in modern times or for some other reason. Bede, for example, is important because he shows how early these pictures are, deriving, as many of them do, from the Dialogues of Gregory the Great, the good Pope through whom Kent was evangelised in the sixth century; though indeed Gregory is not the first—one of the earliest is a fifth-century vision of heretics in hell, recorded of a monk called Cyriacus. Here then is a portion of one of the visions recorded by Bede early in the eighth century:—

When I came into it, the darkness, by degrees, grew so thick, that I could see nothing besides it and the shape and garment of him that led me. As we went on through the shades of night, on a sudden there appeared before us frequent globes of black flames, rising as it

[1] S. Hopkins, *An Enquiry*, Newport, Rhode Island, 1783, pp. 154-5.

were out of a great pit, and falling back again into the same . . . and I observed that all the flames, as they ascended were full of human souls, which, like sparks flying up with smoke, were sometimes thrown on high, and again, when the vapour of the fire ceased, dropped down into the depth below. Moreover, an insufferable stench came forth with the vapours, and filled all those dark places. . . . When that noise, growing plainer, came up to me, I observed a gang of evil spirits dragging the howling and lamenting souls of men into the midst of the darkness, whilst they themselves laughed and rejoiced. Among those men, as I could discern, there was one shorn like a clergyman, a layman, and a woman. The evil spirits that dragged them went down into the midst of the burning pit ; and as they went down deeper, I could no longer distinguish between the lamentation of the men and the laughing of the devils, yet I still had a confused sound in my ears.[1]

It is all summed up authoritatively by the cold intellectualism of Aquinas, in whose brief lines the punishment even of the good is shocking beyond words ; for, as Gregory the Great had laid down,[2] sin is in no case absolved without punishment, or, as Aquinas carefully explained, the *culpa* is removed by forgiveness but not the *reatus*, so that even pious people must be tormented for little trespasses "*ad purgandum reliquias peccati*" :—

The place of purgatory is a place in the lower regions near to hell, so that the fire is the same which tortures the damned in hell and the just in purgatory.

There is the pain of the senses, by which they are

[1] *The Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, ed. J. A. Giles, George Bell, 1894, Bk. V, C. 12, p. 255.
[2] Gregory, *Moralium*, Migne, tom. I, col. 508 ff.

physically punished ; and so much that the least pain of purgatory exceeds the greatest pain of this present life.[1]

It was indeed " more grievous to be in purgatory for the twinkling of an eye, than to bear all the agony of St. Lawrence on his grid-iron." [2]

If such was purgatory, what was hell ? It was different in that it had no end ; or, as Berthold of Regensburg, the greatest preacher of the thirteenth century, explained :—

The tortures will endure as many thousand years as there are drops in the sea, or as the number of all the hairs that have grown on man and beast since God first made Adam ; and then, after all those years, the pains will only be at their beginning.[3]

And not only could fifteen days of inconceivable torment be inflicted for an act which was charming and admirable, as Herolt relates—

The sister of St. Damian appeared to him after her death, and said that she was in the greatest torture ; and when the saint enquired what might be the cause of so great pains, after her so holy life, then she made answer : " Because once, standing in mine own chamber, I listened with a certain sweetness to the songs of them that danced in the streets, for which I did no penance during my earthly life ; wherefore I must now be punished for fifteen days in purgatory." [4]

[1] Aquinas, *Summa*, Pars III, Appendix, q. 1, art. 2 ; q. 2, art. 1.
[2] See the vision of Albert the Great, quoted in two versions in G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, Cambridge University Press, vol. i, pp. 75, 535.
[3] Qu. in Coulton, *op. cit.*, p. 450.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 534.

III.—THE PRISON OF HELL.
(*From "Hell Opened to Christians"*)

—not only could the love of music be punished thus for a period, but—inconceivable thought!—it could be so punished world without end. The same famous medieval teacher, Herolt, tells us that—

A certain devout widow was privileged to look in upon the tortures of hell, and saw a soul which had been too musical on earth. "Demons stood by him, blowing through trumpets into his ears so that flames of fire gushed out from his ears and eyes and nostrils and at every pore; and they said unto him, 'Take this for those vain chants and songs to which thou hast listened!'" [1]

No wonder that people thought the sun was red at even because it was about to visit the infernal regions!

An example of a later date than Aquinas will serve to show what his summary statement actually means. We can see the preacher at work from this example of Fra Luis de Granada, in the fourteenth century:—

There will the condemned in cruel rage and despair turn their fury against God and themselves, gnawing their flesh with their mouths, bursting themselves with sighs, breaking their teeth with gnashing, furiously tearing themselves with their nails, and everlastingly blaspheming against the Judge. . . . Oh wretched tongues that will speak no word save blasphemy! Oh miserable ears that will hear no sounds but groans! Oh unhappy eyes that will see nothing but agonies! Oh tortured bodies that will have no refreshment but flames! . . . We are terrified . . . when we read of executioners, scourging, disjointing, dismembering,

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 538.

tearing them in pieces, burning them with plates of hot metal. But these things are but a jest, a shadow compared with the torments of the next life.[1]

This is not some mere belated scream from the Middle Ages; for it was considered so edifying that it was translated and republished by an English priest in the middle of Queen Victoria's reign.

Nor can the following extract from Ignatius Loyola be relegated to an outgrown past; for the Spiritual Exercises are one of the chief classics of Roman Catholic devotion, and are widely used at the present time. A whole day is given to the contemplation of hell—"Quinto exercicio es meditación del infierno,"—but let us quote this Fifth Exercise from a recent authorised translation:—

The fifth exercise is a meditation on hell; it contains, after the preparatory prayer and two preludes, five points and one colloquy. Let the preparatory prayer be as usual. The first prelude, which is here to see with the eye of the imagination the length, breadth and depth of hell. The second, to ask for what I want; it will be here to ask for an intimate sense of the pain that the damned suffer, so that, if through my faults I become forgetful of the love of the Eternal Lord, at least the fear of pains and penalties may be an aid to me not to give way to sin. The first point will be to see with the eye of the imagination those great fires, and those souls as it were in bodies of fire. The second, to hear with the ears lamentations, howlings, cries, blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against all his Saints. The third, with the sense of smell, to smell smoke, brimstone,

[1] *Counsels on Holiness of Life, being the First Part of the Sinner's Guide*, ed. Orby Shipley, Rivingtons, 1869, pp. 69, 72.

refuse and rottenness![1] The fourth, to taste with the taste bitter things, as tears, sadness, and the worm of conscience. The fifth, to feel with the sense of touch how those fires do touch and burn souls. Making one colloquy with Christ our Lord, to bring to memory the souls that are in hell, some because they did not believe in the Coming, others because, while believing, they did not work according to his Commandment; making three classes, the first, before the Coming; the second, during his lifetime; the third, since his life in the world; and at the same time to give him thanks for not having allowed me to fall into any of these classes by bringing my life to an end.[2]

This cruel and foolish meditation, with all its carefully articulated materialism, and its naïve belief in the eternal failure of an endlessly blasphemed Deity, is directed to be made, first at midnight, then on rising, then before or after mass, a fourth time at vespers, and a fifth before supper.

Bishop Challoner deserves to be quoted here, because his writings also are still much used and very highly esteemed by Roman Catholics at the present day:—

In this gloomy region, no sun, no moon, no stars appear; no comfortable rays of light, not even the least glimpse, are ever to be seen. The very fire that

[1] The stench, one would think, was hardly worth meditating upon; but it was often pressed. Thus in *Hell Opened to Christians* (F. Pinamonti, Dublin, 1753, p. 20) it is analysed as the stink of all the filth of the earth, secondly of burning brimstone, and thirdly of decaying carcases, and the reader is referred to St. Bonaventura for more.

[2] *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*; Spanish and English, with a continuous commentary by Joseph Rickaby, S.J. (imprimatur of "Peter, Bishop of Southwark"), Burns and Oates, 1915, pp. 40–2.

burns there, contrary to the natural property of that element, is black and darksome, and affords no light to the wretches it torments, except it be to discover to them such objects as may increase their misery. Christians, what would you think were you sentenced to pass the remainder of your days in some horrid dungeon, or hole, deep under ground, where you should never see the light? Would not death itself be preferable to such a punishment? And what is this to that eternal night, to which the damned are sentenced? The Egyptians were in a sad condition when, for three days, the whole kingdom was covered with a dreadful darkness, caused by such gross exhalations that they might even be felt by the hand. But this misery was soon over, and they were comforted by the return of light. Not so the damned in Hell: whose night shall never have a morning, or ever expect the dawning of day! Consider, secondly, that the horror of this eternal night shall be, beyond measure, aggravated by the dismal music with which the poor wretches shall be for ever entertained in this melancholy abode: which shall be no other than dreadful curses and blasphemies, the insulting voices of the tormentors, and the howlings, groans, and shrieks of the tormented, etc. And that the other senses may also come in for their share of misery, the smell shall be for ever regaled with the loathsome exhalations of those infernal dungeons, and the intolerable stench of those half-putrified carcases which are broiling there: the taste shall be oppressed with a most ravenous hunger and thirst, and the feeling with an insupportable fire.[1]

A sermon by Jonathan Edwards also has been republished in the Victorian era, more than once—

[1] *Think Well On't: or, Reflections on the Great Truths of the Christian Religion, for every day in the Month,* by Bishop R. Challoner (Derby, London, and Dublin, 1843, pp. 45–6).

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,[1] in which God is compared to a tiger :—" You cannot stand before an infuriated tiger even ; what then will you do when God rushes against you in all his wrath ? " But Jonathan Edwards was not a mere popular preacher. Professor H. N. Gardiner says in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (vol. ix, 1910, p. 5), that he was " Certainly the most able metaphysician and the most influential religious thinker of America," and ranks him with Augustine and Aquinas, with Calvin, Spinoza, Berkeley, and Hume. It is said that his famous sermon on Sinners was preached to a congregation who were accused of carelessness ; but it *was* preached, and reprinted, and there are two others with it. Nor was this all : he had, in 1738, published a sermon on *The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners* ; he also wrote a revolting book on *Original Sin* : and he declared of the " Calvinistic " doctrine of the election of sinners to eternal damnation that it was " exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet." Here is a typical passage :—

We can conceive but little of the matter ; but to help your conception, imagine yourself to be cast into a fiery oven, or a great furnace, where your pain would be as much greater than that occasioned by accidentally touching a coal of fire, as the heat is greater. Imagine also that your body were to lie there for a quarter of an hour, full of fire, and all the while full of quick sense ; what horror would you feel at the entrance of such a furnace ! and how long would that quarter of

[1] In *History and Repository of Pulpit Eloquence*, H. C. Fish, vol. ii, 1857 ; *The Great Sermons of the Great Preachers*, London, 1858. It was also issued as a tract, and an edition in Gaelic was published in Edinburgh, as late as 1889.

an hour seem to you! And after you had endured it for one minute, how overbearing would it be to you to think that you had to endure it the other fourteen!

But what would be the effect on your soul, if you knew you must lie there enduring that torment to the full for twenty-four hours! And how much greater would be the effect, if you knew you must endure it for a whole year; and how vastly greater still, if you knew you must endure it for a thousand years! —O then, how would your hearts sink, if you knew, that you must bear it for ever and ever! that there would be no end! that after millions of millions of ages, your torment would be no nearer to an end, and that you never, never should be delivered.[1]

There must still be people alive whose childhood was terrified by the writings of a Redemptorist priest, whose appropriate name was Father Furniss. The importance of this man, is that his works were published *permissu superiorum*, and were sold in extraordinary numbers.[2] They abound in passages like the following, which is called "THE FIFTH DUNGEON—*The Red-hot Oven*." It will be noticed that the victim is young enough to be called 'it,' and yet has committed 'very bad mortal sins,' and that if God had not cut short its life early, its torments would have been much worse :—

You are going to see again the child about which you read in the *Terrible Judgment*, that it was condemned to Hell. See! it is a pitiful sight. The little child is in this red-hot oven. Hear how it screams

[1] Jonathan Edwards, *Sermons*, London, 1817, vol. vii, p. 459. The three sermons on "The Future Punishment of the Wicked" are Nos. IX, X, XI.

[2] The *Catholic Encyclopædia* says, "four millions of his books have been sold."

to come out. See how it turns and twists itself about in the fire. It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor of the oven. You can see on the face of this little child what you see on the faces of all in Hell—despair, desperate and horrible !

The same law which is for others is also for children. If children, knowingly and willingly, break God's commandments, they also must be punished like others. This child committed very bad mortal sins, knowing well the harm of what it was doing, and knowing that Hell would be the punishment. God was very good to this child [*sic !*]. Very likely God saw that this child would get worse and worse, would never repent, and so it would have to be punished much more in Hell. So God in his mercy called it out of the world in its early childhood.[1]

Has this kind of thing ceased ? I have myself heard it in Ireland and in churches on the Continent ; and I am told that it is still to be heard also in the obscurer conventicles of England. Here at least is an example from a famous English preacher who died as recently as 1892—though it is significant that his coarser descriptions belong to the earlier period (1863–7) of his printed sermons, which run well into the third thousand, and contain many passages on hell :—

See then, sinner, heaven is rest, perfect rest—but there is no rest in hell ; it is labour in the fire, but no ease, no peace, no sleep, no calm, no quiet ; everlasting storm ; eternal hurricane ; unceasing tempest. In the worst disease there are some respites . . . there is no pause in hell's torments. The dreadful music

[1] *Books for Children.* Book X, *The Sight of Hell,* by the Rev. J. Furniss, C.SS.R. (Dublin, Duffy, *c.* 1850).

of the eternal miserere has not so much as a single stop in it. It is on, on, on, with crash of battle, and dust and blood, and fire and vapour of smoke.[1]

But it would be a mistake to accuse any of the above descriptions of exaggeration. In the nature of things they must all be understatements; for human imagination cannot picture, nor human language describe, a torment "greater than any pain of this present life," nor can our human minds reach at all the devilish conception of any torment lasting for ever and ever.

And these few scattered extracts can give only a faint idea of the effect produced by the continuous study of such a book as *Hell Opened to Christians*,[2] "every Day in the Week," from Sunday when the unfortunate reader is told to meditate on the thought—among other things—that, whereas in prison a man can pace his cell, and in sickness can turn in his bed, in hell "they shall be bound up like a Fagot"; on through the other days of carefully planned terror, when, for instance, he reads, after a quotation from Aquinas, "God for that End having gather'd together all manner of Pains . . . he will empty the Arsenal of his Justice, of all its Darts, to strike them on all Sides, that there may be no Place in them without its Wound"; and that fire "being the Invention of God himself" is incomparably worse than "all the Butcheries which Men or the Devils could have ever invented"; till on Saturday he is told that all this is contained in one mortal sin, and therefore bidden

[1] C. H. Spurgeon, *Sermon* No. 518, "The Bridgeless Gulph," July 1863, London, Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. ix, p. 373.
[2] Tr. from F. Pinamonti, Dublin, 1753, pp. 16, 85, 118, 120.

to "Have recourse to Confession, to fly from that wicked Company, avoid the Danger of Sin, frequent the Sacraments, do Penance, retire, if necessary, from the World, to save thy Soul."

V. Spiritualising Hell

Attempts have been made in modern times to render hell less palpably indecent by saying that the fire is spiritual and the pains merely mental. This was necessary because, since the spiritual nature of the soul has been realised, the notion of a material soul broiling in a material fire survives now only among the remoter peasantries. But such dematerialisation does not remove the agony of hell. The *Catechismus Romanus* of the Council of Trent, which is definite about the fire being a "corporal punishment," "felt through the organs of sense," is quite clear also in stating that the mental pain is "the heaviest punishment." [1]

Cardinal Newman, in his *Dream of Gerontius*, makes the chief pains of purgatory "the longing for Him whom thou seest not" and "the shame of self at thought of seeing Him"; and the hero is addressed, "Softly and gently, dear ransomed soul," and given a "dip" which is akin to bliss "in the lake"; but this is not at all like the authorised teaching. A saint who was on the verge of perfection might be imagined to pass through some such rapid ecstasy of purification, and Newman may have hoped that his last end might be like that which he imagined for Gerontius; but this is mythology, and has no resemblance to the

[1] *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, tr. J. Donovan, 1854, i, art. vii.

doctrine of future punishment, temporal or eternal, so consistently taught by his Church. Many good men in modern times have been led by their natural humanity to attempt some pious evasion on these lines; but Newman as a theologian was too well-instructed to gloss over doctrines which in poetry might be left on one side. He said himself of the Catechism of the Council of Trent (in his *Apologia*), "I rarely preach a sermon, but I go to this beautiful and complete Catechism to get both my matter and my doctrine." In a sermon on hell he has described for us some of the things which spiritual agony involves:—

"Impossible! I a lost soul! I separated from hope and peace for ever!" . . . And the poor soul struggles and wrestles in the grasp of the mighty demon which has hold of it, and whose every touch is torment. "Oh, atrocious!" it shrieks in agony, and in anger too, as if the very keenness of the infliction were a proof of its injustice. "A second! and a third! I can bear no more! Stop, horrible fiend, give over; I am a man, and not such as thou! I am not food for thee, or sport for thee! . . . I am well versed in science and art; I have been refined by literature; I have had an eye for the beauties of nature . . . I have attended the sacraments for years . . . I died in communion with the Church; nothing, nothing which I have ever been, which I have ever seen, bears any resemblance to thee, and to the flame and stench which exhale from thee." . . . Alas! poor soul! . . . What profiteth it? what profiteth it? His soul is in hell. O ye children of men, while thus ye speak, his soul is in the beginning of those torments in which his body will soon have part, and which will never die.[1]

[1] J. H. Newman, *Discourses to Mixed Congregations*, Burns and Oates, 4th ed., 1871, "Neglect of Divine Calls and Warnings."

Such then are the agonies of the soul, before ever the body has part in them, as described by a refined writer in modern times, and carefully revised and reprinted. Other nineteenth-century theologians are equally clear that the attempt to evade the loathsome doctrine by substituting 'mental' for the orthodox 'corporal' does not alter its malignity. Pusey, for instance, was but echoing the *Catechismus Romanus* [1] when he drew attention to one feature of the mental agony thus :—

Apart from all those terrific physical miseries . . . the society of the damned were misery unutterable. Conceive this alone, to which St. Paul says human nature of itself went, hatred of God, intrinsic hatefulness, hatred of one another. Gather in one in your mind an assembly of all those men or women, from whom whether in history or in fiction, your memory most shrinks (no fiction can reach the reality of human sin) ; gather in mind all which is most loathsome, most revolting, the most treacherous, malicious, coarse, brutal, inventive, fiendish cruelty, unsoftened by any remains of human feeling : such as thou couldst not endure for a single hour ; conceive the fierce fiery eyes of hate, spite, phrenzied rage, ever fixed on thee, glaring on thee, looking thee through and through with hate ; sleepless in their horrible gaze ; felt if not seen, never to be turned from, except to quail under the like piercing sight of hate ; hear those yells of blaspheming concentrated hate, as they echo along the lurid vault of hell ; everyone hating

[1] *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* (i, vii, *as above*) points out that earthly pain is often alleviated by human companionship : " What then shall be the misery of the damned, to whom, in such extreme wretchedness [*ærumnis*], it shall never be permitted to be loosed from the society of the most wretched [*perditissimorum*] demons ? "

everyone and venting that hate unceasingly with every conceivable expression of malignity; conceive all this, multiplied, intensified reflected all around, on every side; and, amid it, the especial hatred of anyone whose sin thou sharedst, whom thou didst thoughtlessly encourage in sin, or teach some sin before unknown—a deathlessness of hate were in itself everlasting misery.[1]

Such descriptions of mental torment cannot be accused of exaggeration. As Shakespeare makes Claudio say in *Measure for Measure* (III, i) :—

> The weariest and most loathed worldly life
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature is a paradise
> To what we fear of death.

A once-famous Elizabethan Puritan, 'Silver-tongued Smith,' flashes the picture of mental torture upon us, when he says of Judas :—

All the furies of hell leap upon his heart like a stage, Thought calleth to Fear: Fear whistleth to horror; horror beckoneth to despair, and saith, "Come and help me torment this sinner." One saith that she cometh from this sin, and another saith that she cometh from that sin : so he goes through a thousand deaths and cannot die. Irons are laid upon his body like a prisoner. All his lights are put out at once.[2]

Indeed the authorities implicitly warn us not to seek any comfort in the thought of a fireless hell. As one old writer says, the mere sight of two devils can be so frightful that, rather than see them again, a

[1] E. B. Pusey, *Everlasting Punishment* (a Sermon preached before the University in Oxford), Parker and Rivington, 1864, p. 15.

[2] Henry Smith, *Sermons*, London, 1592, p. 900 (1866 ed., vol. i, p. 397, spelling modernised).

man would walk till the day of judgment on fire of sulphur and molten metal.

But in truth words are as inadequate to describe a mental as a bodily hell. Let the reader try to remember the most sickening fears that tormented his childhood, the most hideous stories, the most revolting *macabre*, that ever haunted his imagination, his worst moments of despair, his most overwhelming agonies of bereavement, and picture them combined and unabating in one everlasting loneliness of shame ; and he will not thank those modern theologians who pretended that hell had lost half its evil by losing all its grossness.

VI. The Fate of the Unbaptised

The traditional orthodoxy has been that, not the heathen only, but all who are unbaptised, including innocent babes and those Christians who, like the Society of Friends, do not use the rite of baptism, cannot be saved. Baptism is the gate of the Church, and outside the Church according to this logic there can be no salvation—*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. The African Cyprian had suggested the fatal idea [1] ; the African Augustine explained it further when he said that all who are not with Christ are with the devil.[2] The Council of Trent has laid down the doctrine authoritatively—" If anyone saith, that baptism is free [*liberum*, optional], that is, not necessary unto salvation ; let him be anathema." [3]

[1] " Nihil illi extra ecclesiam licere." Cyprian, *Ep.* lxxiii.

[2] In his *De Peccatorum Meritis*, i, 28. Cf. " Nec salus nec vita aeterna sine baptismo et corpore et sanguine Domini cuiquam speranda est." *Ibid.*, 24.

[3] *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, tr. J. Waterworth, Dolman, 1848, p. 56 (session vii, canon 5).

The result of this doctrine is vividly shown in a passage from the letters of the great missionary, Francis Xavier :—

One of the things that most pains and torments these Japanese is that we teach them that the prison of hell is irrevocably shut, so that there is no egress therefrom. For they grieve over the fate of their departed children, of their parents and relatives, and they often show their grief by their tears. So they ask us if there is any hope, any way to free them by prayer from that eternal misery, and I am obliged to answer that there is absolutely none. Their grief at this affects and torments them wonderfully ; they almost pine away with sorrow. But there is this good thing about their trouble—it makes one hope that they will all be the more laborious for their own salvation, lest they, like their forefathers, should be condemned to everlasting punishment. They often ask if God cannot take their fathers out of hell, and why their punishment must never have an end. We gave them a satisfactory answer, but they did not cease to grieve over the misfortune of their relatives ; and I can hardly restrain my tears sometimes at seeing men so dear to my heart suffer such intense pain about a thing which is already done with and can never be undone.[1]

Calvin also, Xavier's contemporary, confessed that the " eternal death of so many nations, together with their infant children," was a *decretum horribile*—" a decree terrible, I confess," he said, " but true." It is a common mistake to think that this predestinarianism was peculiar to Calvin. His distinctive contribution

[1] *Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier*, ed. R. J. Coleridge (Letter from Cochin, Jan. 29, 1552), Burns and Oates, new ed., 1881, p. 347.

was the doctrine of the Visible Church of the Elect : what is generally called ' Calvinism,' i.e. the Augustinian doctrine of predestination to hell he shared with most theologians of his age, with the Dominican Melchior Cano, the doctors of the Sorbonne and other followers of Aquinas, and with Luther. Indeed, only one of the leading Reformers, Zwingli, the most philosophic of them all, believed in the salvation of heathen people : he declared that all true and virtuous men will be in heaven, including the heathen ; and he regarded the salvation of unbaptised children as certain.[1]

Until Zwingli, who died in 1531, and the alteration of the statement in the *Bishops' Book* by our Reformers in 1543 (which is mentioned below on page 105), the doctrine of the damnation of unbaptised infants was universally taught. Augustine indeed, who is responsible for the intolerable idea, had hoped for a " mildest damnation of all " ; but during the ages which followed, their punishment was generally described as by fire—and this opinion was held even by St. Anselm. The prevalent opinion is clearly stated in a sixth-century treatise by St. Fulgentius, which long enjoyed an exceptionally high authority, and until the time of Erasmus was generally thought to be by Augustine himself :—

Also, little children who have begun to live in their mothers' womb and have there died, or who, having been just born, have passed away from the world without the sacrament of holy baptism, administered in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must be punished by the eternal torture of undying fire.[2]

[1] U. Zwingli, *Fidei Christianæ Expositio*, Op. IV, 1841, p. 65.
[2] Fulgentius, *De Fide*, 70.

In the thirteenth century, this opinion—generally known in the words of a later theologian, who " doubted not there were infants not a span long crawling about the floor of hell "—was softened by Thomas Aquinas, who said there were four hells, one of darkness and pain, for the damned ; one of pain without darkness, namely purgatory ; and two of darkness without pain, one for the Patriarchs of the Old Testament ; and the other, of darkness, " yet without bodily pain ; and this is called the children's limbo." [1] Such was the medieval mercy ! Countless millions of little children, sighing eternally, separated from " the Divine vision, and from grace," and from their mothers, who, poor things, tried by many superstitious devices to avert the doom which the Church pronounced on their still-born babes, and persisted in pathetic little sacraments of their own, in spite of rigorous attempts to prevent them.[2] Their instinct was right—children whom God made to be gay and happy and beloved were now declared to be " without bodily pain " indeed, but consigned to an everlasting childhood of hopeless misery.

This doctrine of the damnation of infants, which had been first formally decreed by the Council of Lyons in 1274, the year of Aquinas' death, was further ratified in the same words by the Council of Florence, also of œcumenical authority in the Roman Catholic Church, those dying in ' original sin ' being consigned to hell, but with ' unequal punishments ' as compared with those in mortal sin—" illorum animas qui in actuali mortali peccato, vel solo originali decedunt, mox in

[1] *Summa* (*In Sent.*), lib. iii, q. 2, a, art. 1.

[2] For an account of these practices, see Thiers, *Traité des Superstitions*, Paris, 1704.

infernum descendere, pœnis tamen disparibus puniendas." The Council of Trent anathematised those who should say that "infants . . . derive nothing of original sin from Adam, which has need of being expiated by the laver of regeneration for the obtaining life everlasting" [1]—nor was the Synod of Dort, as we have seen, of any other opinion. The Catechism of the Council of Trent orders the clergy to teach that "unless they are regenerated through the grace of baptism, be their parents Christians or infidels, they are born to eternal misery and everlasting destruction [in sempiternam miseriam et interitum]." [2]

In this matter of the damnation of infants, it is notable that the Eastern Orthodox Church, although it was much influenced by Western medieval ideas, and accepted the punitive doctrine of hell, yet maintained its own characteristic position which was at once more spiritual and less defined, and never lost sight of its own Greek Fathers with their less legalistic ideas and their strain of universalism. Thus the Eastern Church, after the Council of Florence (which was an abortive attempt at reunion), refused to ratify the doctrine of purgatory as there declared, and still repudiates this doctrine (see pp. 63, 101). Neither did she follow the Council of Florence in damning the unbaptised. The teaching of the Eastern Church to-day has been well expounded by the representative Russian theologian, Khomiakov, as follows :—

[1] *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, tr. J. Waterworth, Dolman, 1848, p. 23 (session 5, 4).

[2] *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* (1564), tr. J. Donovan, Dublin, 1829, p. 172 (Part II, cap. 2, Of Baptism). For the opinions of Bellarmine, Petavius, and others, and for recent attempts to grapple with the subject, see G. G. Coulton, *Infant Perdition*, in his *Medieval Studies*, No. 16, Simpkin, Marshall, 1922.

God can glorify the sacrament of Baptism just as well before as after its administration. Thus the difference between the *opus operans* and the *opus operatum* disappears. We know that there are many persons who have not christened their children, and many who have not admitted them to Communion in the Holy Mysteries, and many who have not confirmed them : but the Holy Church understands things otherwise, christening infants and confirming them and admitting them to Communion. She has not ordained these things in order to condemn unbaptised children, whose angels do alway behold the face of God : but she has ordained this according to the spirit of love which lives within her.[1]

In the West, the excommunicate shared the fate of the unbaptised, and in France before the Revolution all actors and actresses were thus consigned to hell, among those who were " manifestly disreputable, such as harlots, concubines, and comedians " ; and, as late as 1839, " actors and comedians." [2] That all actors were in a state of mortal sin was declared by the Sorbonne in 1694, and by other authorities ; and they were deprived of the sacraments upon which their salvation depended, living and dying.[3]

[1] Khomiakov, qu. W. J. Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church*, London, 1895, p. 215.

[2] " Arcendi autem sunt publice indigni : quales sunt notorie excommunicati ; interdicti ; manifesteque infames, ut meretrices, concubinarii, comoedi." *Rituale Parisiense*, auctoritate . . . Cardinalis de Noailles, Archiepiscopi. Paris, 1777, p. 63. " Arcendi sunt peccatores publici ; quales sunt . . . 3 : conditione seu professione publicâ infames, quemadmodum histriones et comoedi." *Rituale Parisiense*, auctoritate . . . Hyancinthi Ludovici de Quelen, Parisiensis Archiepiscopi. Paris, 1839, p. 127. So also the Rituals of Poitiers and of Séez.

[3] Bossuet says in his *Réflections sur la Comédie* (1696), " On prive des sacrements, et à la vie et à la mort, ceux qui jouent la comédie, s'ils ne renoncent à leur art." There is a large mass of evidence in Desprez de Boissy, *Lettres sur les Spectacles*, Paris, 1780.

The consequence was that actors and actresses could not be lawfully married, were buried like dogs, and were supposed to be in everlasting torment when they died. One of the most curious of popular errors is the idea that Puritanism was a British peculiarity. Shakespeare had his monument in the parish church where he was buried, and his epitaph was written by the great protagonist of our milder English Puritanism, John Milton. A striking instance of the difference is that of the most famous of French actresses, Adrienne Lecouvreur, who was refused Christian burial when she died in 1730, the very year in which there died also the most famous English actress of the time, Nan Oldfield, who was buried with almost regal pomp in Westminster Abbey.

The Church of England narrowly escaped being committed to the doctrine of the damnation of the unbaptised; but the care with which her formularies avoid extreme positions saved her, in this as in other matters—perhaps owing to the fact that the laity were never very far from the counsels of the clergy, and that statesmen had so much to do with the appointment of the bishops. Besides the removal of the damnation of infants from the *Bishops' Book* (p. 106), the subject is dealt with in the 18th Article, which contents itself with the guarded statement that a man is not saved "by the Law or Sect which he professeth,"—which is only too true; and that "holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved." No doubt to most people at the present day that "Name" would mean more than it did to men in the sixteenth century, and we should say that non-Christians find salvation by the grace

and goodness which belong to that Name. But this is only what Bishop Ken said more than two centuries ago,—when he spoke of the heathen who " Pardon gain'd by that, and by no other Name," as—

> Trophies of universal Grace ;
> They ne'er beheld the Evangelick light.

And it was Ken in this poem who made Socrates say, " I for the one true God a Martyr died," and who described unbaptised infants " numberless " in " the region of the happy Dead." [1]

This is a remarkable advance on the great liberal-minded layman of the fourteenth century, who, in the first circle of hell, heard the sighs that caused the eternal air to tremble, and saw the sadness, without torment, of the great crowds of children, and women, and men. " They sinned not," explains Virgil, " and though they have merit, it suffices not ; for they had not baptism " :—

> Così si mise, e così me fe' entrare
> Nel primo cerchio che l'abisso cinge.
> Quivi, secondo che per ascoltare,
> Non avea pianto, ma' che di sospiri,
> Che l'aura eterna facevan tremare :
> E ciò avvenia di duol senza martiri,
> Ch' avean le turbe, ch' eran molte e grandi,
> E d'infanti e di femmine e di viri.
> Lo buon Mæstro a me : Tu non dimandi
> Che spiriti son questi, che tu vedi ?
> Or vo' che sappi, innanzi che più andi,
> Ch' ei non peccaro : e s'egli hanno mercedi,
> Non basta, perch' ei non ebber battesmo,
> Ch' è porta della Fede che tu credi.[2]

[1] T. Ken, *Works*, London, 1721, vol. ii, pp. 131–2.

[2] Dante, *Inferno*, canto iv, 23–36. In the 19th canto of the *Paradiso*, Dante shows his own misgivings, but is answered by the usual argument that God's will is inscrutable. He goes on to say that many Christian princes will be worse off than the virtuous heathen, but he does not deny the orthodox doctrine.

VII. The Paucity of the Saved

Although welcome attempts have in modern times been made to reduce the number of the damned by covering virtuous heretics (when baptised) with the doctrine of ' invincible ignorance,' and although others besides Dante have wished to mitigate the affliction of a few great pagans like Virgil (sometimes also Plato, Seneca, and Trajan), the belief has always been that the lost are far more numerous than the saved. Indeed a little simple arithmetic shows that it must be so,—as the American Board of Missions said, half a century ago, " Within the last thirty years a whole generation of five hundred millions have gone down to eternal death,"—and it flashes upon one that to such mentality as this may be due that curious prejudice against missionary work which still survives among those who do not know how broad-minded and wise is the mission world of to-day. Dr. Farrar made a curious study of opinions on " the Fewness of the Saved " (to use the title of a sermon by Dr. Pusey) ; and more recently Dr. Coulton has gathered some interesting medieval examples of the commonly accepted *salvandorum paucitas*.[1] To these I would refer any reader who wishes to study a little further this unpleasant subject : he will find many references there, and further information from Recupito, Darling, and others. Even the cautious Aquinas speaks of the saved as *aliquos* and the damned as *plurimos*.[2]

[1] F. W. Farrar, *Mercy and Judgment*, Macmillan, 1894, pp. 140–55 ; G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, vol. i, pp. 445–9. In vol. ii, p. 665, he mentions a valuable account of the opinion of the saints on the subject, published by F. X. Godts in Brussels about 1895, which was suppressed immediately by the ecclesiastical authorities and is practically impossible to procure.

[2] Aquinas, *Summa*, Pars I, q. xxiii, art. 7.

Herolt, a great authority in the thirteenth century, relates that a holy hermit appeared to a lady and told her that "30,000 died on the same day as I; of whom St. Bernard and I alone went to heaven; and three others to purgatory: all the rest went down to hell." [1] At the beginning of the seventeenth century the famous Jesuit commentator, Cornelius à Lapide, wrote that "often out of a thousand men, nay even out of ten thousand, scarcely one is saved," [2] and this is not the most pessimistic estimate. Early in the eighteenth century, Massillon, who is generally considered the greatest preacher of France, in one of his most famous sermons—*Sur le petit Nombre des Élus*—said :—

Do you believe that the number would be at least equal? Do you believe that there would even be found ten righteous, when formerly five whole cities could not furnish so many? I ask you. You know not: and I know it not. . . . Perhaps among all who listen to me, ten just men would not be found; perhaps fewer still. What do I know, O my God! I dare not with a fixed eye regard the depths of thy judgment and thy justice. More than one, perhaps, would not be found amongst us all.[3]

The odd thing is that the favourite text to prove the enormity has been the gentle saying of Christ, "Fear not, little flock"; though of course other Bible passages were also used to prove the enormous preponderance of the damned,—as for instance that,

[1] Qu. Coulton, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 447.
[2] *In Apoc.*, vii, 7.
[3] Massillon's sermon is printed in English in *History and Repository of Pulpit Eloquence*, H. C. Fish, New York, 1857, Vol. II, pp. 138 ff.

IV.—The Ladder of Salvation
(Chaldon Church)

out of sixty wives, eighty concubines, and numberless other ladies, King Solomon really loved only one—the heroine of the Song of Songs.

Scripture proofs of this kind can easily be multiplied : Sodom and Gomorrah are used by Massillon in the quotation we have given ; the sparing of Rahab's house alone in the massacre of Jericho was another argument, and so were the three hundred whom Gideon chose out of twenty-two thousand. Indeed an Oxford professor of history, Du Moulin, published in 1680 a book on *The Number of the Elect,* in which he " proved plainly from Scripture " " that not one in a hundred thousand (nay, probably not one in a million) from Adam down to our own time, shall be saved."

VIII. Purgatory

It is a common mistake to suppose that the doctrine of purgatory mitigates that of hell. The truth is that it vastly increases the horror of future punishment ; for it does not hold out any help to those who are to be damned (whether for their sins, or because they are heathen, heretic, excommunicate, or unbaptised), but only adds torment to the future state of the just. The torment is the same for those in purgatory as for those in hell, according to the authoritative Thomas Aquinas, as we have seen, exceeding anything we have experience of, and only differs from that of hell in not lasting for ever.[1] Thus a hideous uncertainty was (and is still) thrown over the future : no one who believes in the doctrine knows what his fate will be, or where those he loves are, or for how long. The only course is to hope they

[1] For a description of purgatorial torments see p. 110.

are in the terminable agony of purgatory, and to win as many indulgences and secure as many masses as possible, without ever knowing for how much they have sufficed.

As for duration, the life in hell was everlasting; but the life in purgatory might extend (as many still believe) over countless years. The reckoning used to be in very long figures:—"You shall read these prayers, and you earn 46,000 years indulgences" is an example I once came across in editing an old book.[1] On such a scale, millions of years would presumably be the time in purgatory for many who leave no friends to win indulgences for them, and no money for masses.

Thus the idea of purgatory, suggested doubtfully by Augustine, as when he said that "there are many souls not good enough to dispense with this provision [fire], and not bad enough not to be benefited by it,"[2] and horribly developed two centuries later (*c.* 582) by Pope Gregory the Great, did not lighten the hell doctrine, but only increased the terrors of religion, and the consequent power of the clergy; because purgatory was reserved only for the righteous, few of whom could escape it—indeed, according to Gregory, purgatory availed only for 'the lighter faults' like immoderate laughter. Peter Lombard, in the twelfth century, taught that prayers for the dead brought mitigation to the moderately wicked, a fuller absolution to the

[1] *Dat Boexken vander Missen*, 1507 (ed. Alcuin Club, 1903, p. 55).

[2] This opinion is a degeneration of such earlier sayings as those of Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.*, 6, c. 36), that "the punishments of God in hades are remedial and reformatory, and lead to repentance." Augustine is vague and uncertain about a purgatory, "possibly it may be found so, possibly not." *Enchirid*, c. 69, also 67, 68; *De Civ. Dei*, xx, 25; xxi, 17, 20; *Ad Dulcit.*, i. See A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, Eng. trans., J. Millar, 1898, v, p. 233, and cf. p. 268.

moderately good, but no profit to the unbaptised, heretics, or unbelievers. Such miserable uncertainty about the departed brought enormous wealth to the Church : " The fire of purgatory," ran an old proverb, " boils the monk's saucepan." In 1434, the Council of Florence (referred to above on p. 55) made the opinions of the Schoolmen into a dogma : it laid down that for those " who die truly penitent, and in the love of God, but before they have made satisfaction for sins of omission and commission by worthy fruits of repentance, their souls are purified after death by the pains of purgatory, and to the relief of these pains avail the prayers of the faithful, the sacrifices of masses, supplications, alms, and other offices of piety " ; while for those who die in mortal sin, or unbaptised, various degrees of hell are reserved.[1]

Purgatory, according to the still authoritative teaching of Aquinas, only cleanses venial sins ; and there is no conversion possible after death. For mortal sins, unrepented of and unabsolved, the punishment is everlasting hell.[2] Mortal sin includes not hearing mass on a Sunday or holy-day of obligation, and deliberately drinking a glass of water before communion—or a drop of water, or of anything else. Such opinions are formally required of the majority of Christians at the present day ; and, although they are little spoken of, and many good men try to soften them, they have not been repudiated, nor can they be.

That they are accepted to-day is shown by the fact that the Catholic Truth Society has recently reprinted

[1] Gregory, *Dial.*, iv, 39 ; P. Lombard, *Sententiæ*, lib. IV, dist. 45, §2. Florence C. L. Richard, *Analyse des Conciles*, Paris, 1772, II, pp. 469–73.

[2] Aquinas, *Summa*, Part III, q. 99 ; app., q. 1, q. 2.

as a popular tract the chapters by F. W. Faber on purgatory from his book, *All for Jesus.*[1] In this it is stated, (1) That purgatory is for good persons :—" that after trying all our lives to serve God, we should accomplish the tremendous feat of a good death, only to pass from the agonies of the death-bed into fire." (2) That " the pains are extremely severe " : " Many theologians have said, not only that the least pain of purgatory was greater than the greatest pain of earth, but greater than all the pains of earth put together." There is another view, in which the soul goes to purgatory " with its eyes fascinated and its spirit sweetly tranquillized " ; but " The second view of purgatory does not deny any one of the features of the preceding view." (3) That the time is long, and seems longer still " from the extremity of pain " : indeed, souls have appeared " an hour or two after death, and thinking they had been many years in purgatory " :

If we look into the revelations of Sister Francesca of Pampeluna, we shall find among some hundreds of cases, that by far the greater majority suffered thirty, forty, or sixty years. Here are some of the examples : a holy bishop, for some negligence in his high office, had been in purgatory fifty-nine years . . . a priest forty years, because through his negligence some sick persons had died without the Sacraments ; another forty-five years for inconsiderateness in his ministerial functions.

And it does not appear that their time was up. Faber adds that " Bishops seem upon the whole, according to her revelations, to remain longest there, and to be visited with the extreme of rigour " ; but " a gentleman fifty-nine years for worldliness " is mentioned, and

[1] *Purgatory*, by Frederick William Faber, London, Catholic Truth Society, 1926. Our quotations are from pp. 8, 12, 13, 15.

another " sixty-four for fondness for playing at cards for money." And there were " fervent Carmelites, some of whom had wrought miracles in lifetime, still in purgatory ten, twenty, thirty, sixty years after their death, and still not near their deliverance." Thus, the medieval view is still that of to-day ; and the attempt to combine agony with love fails, and fails the more when, as in a story quoted here from Blosius, sexual imagery is invoked. The sheer brutality of unsentimentalised delineation is perhaps preferable to such unwholesomeness ; and in any case, " Both views agree in holding that, what we in the world call very trivial faults, are most severely visited in purgatory."

In fact, the Council of Trent is too decisive to be evaded. In the decree passed in the twenty-fifth session all bishops are enjoined diligently to endeavour that it " be believed by Christ's faithful, held, taught, and everywhere preached." Purgatory is defined in the Catechism of the Council of Trent (i, art. v) as follows :—

There is also the fire of purgatory, in which the souls of just men [*piorum animæ*], being tormented [*cruciatæ*] for a definite time, are expiated, that so an entrance may be made possible for them into the eternal country into which no defiled thing may enter.

It will be noticed that purgatory is not spoken of as a cleansing, but as a place where souls are ' expiated ' (*expiantur*), that is, make satisfaction for their sins. The conception is thus vindictive, and the torments are of the nature of penal vengeance. But even if it were not so, the conception of sin as a stain that can be burnt out is itself a mistake, based on a misleading metaphor. Sin is not something to be washed or burnt

away, but a disease of the will, which can only be cured by a restoration to health. People in modern times have naturally dwelt upon the thought of an 'intermediate state' as an escape from the ethically atrocious idea of a hell; but that phrase is also misleading. It is rather of a progressive development that we have nowadays to think, of the many stages or stations in the Father's home, which are mentioned in the Great Discourse of the Fourth Gospel.[1] It is not an intermediate state between death and a supposed day of judgment that we now surmise, but rather we think quite simply of the next life; and in that life progress must be effected by the growth of what is good in a man, so that the evil—not without pain, it may be, the pain of regret, shame, and repentance, mingled with the creative joy of discovery and release—may drop away. Hell and purgatory were both bad guesses at the mystery, before which our Lord was content with a great reserve. They cannot be made morally or psychologically possible by any process of refinement; for, clarify them as we will, they remain essentially as crude as when men thought that Etna and Vesuvius were vents for the infernal torture-chambers of departed souls.

IX. Hell Imitated on Earth

The result upon men's minds of these ideas about hell and purgatory was appalling. Lecky has shown at length

[1] John 14: 2. The 'many mansions,' are the *mansiones* of the Latin, resting-places, especially the 'stations' on the great Roman roads, where travellers found refreshment, like the dak-bungalows familiar to travellers in India to-day. "This appears to be the true meaning of the Greek word [*monē*] here; so that the contrasted notions of repose and progress are combined in this vision of the future." B. F. Westcott, *St. John*, Murray, 1882, *in loc.*

how persecution and torture, to an extent unexampled in heathen times, were due to the ' Last Things ' being the habitual object of the thoughts and imaginations of men.[1] If you tell men, he says, " that the Being who is the ideal of their lives, confines his affection to the members of a single Church, that he will torture for ever all who are not found within its pale, and that his children will for ever contemplate those tortures in a state of unalloyed felicity, you will prepare the way for every form of persecution." It was as a matter of fact Augustine who really fixed the doctrine of hell upon the Church and suggested that of purgatory, and it was he who was the first Christian theologian to advocate the employment of force against heretics and schismatics.[2] But, after the forcible suppression of paganism, the cases of religious persecution were rare until the extermination of the Albigenses began in 1207, under Pope Innocent III. The first great slaughter was at Béziers, where the Legates reported to Innocent that 20,000 men, women, and children had been slain, and the city burnt, " by reason of God's wrath wondrously kindled against it " ; and the work went on at this rate, with horrors that are better left unmentioned, till the numbers were reckoned by the hundred thousand.[3]

[1] The quotations following are from W. E. H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, Longmans, 20th ed., 1910, i, pp. 329, 327 ; ii, p. 36.

[2] H. Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement*, Macmillan, 1919, p. 345.

[3] The student of history may consult Dr. Lea, *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, Macmillan, 1887, vol. i ; J. Ficker, in *Mittheilungen des Instituts für Oesterreichische Geschichtsforschung*, Vienna, 1880 ; J. Havet, *Œuvres*, Paris, vol. ii ; A. Luchaire, *Innocent III et les Albigeois*, Paris, 1905 ; A. Luchaire, *Innocent III et le Concile du Latran*, Paris, 1908 ; G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Studies, No.* 18, *The Death Penalty for Heresy*, Simpkin Marshall, 1924.

The system of torture which followed, exhibiting "an amount of cold, passionless, studied and deliberate barbarity unrivalled in the history of mankind," Lecky remarks represents "a condition of thought in which men had pondered long and carefully on all forms of suffering, had compared and combined the different forms of torture, till they had become the most consummate masters of their art, had expended on the subject all the resources of the utmost ingenuity, and had pursued it with the ardour of a passion." As for the victim's mother, wife, or daughter, "She saw the body of him who was dearer to her than life, dislocated and writhing and quivering with pain; she watched the slow fire creeping from limb to limb till it had swathed him in a sheet of agony, and when at last the scream of anguish had died away, and the tortured body was at rest, she was told that all this was acceptable to the God she served, and was but a faint image of the sufferings he would inflict through eternity upon the dead."

We can only guess the extent of the system by a few examples here and there. The persecuting Alva is said to have boasted that he had executed 18,600 persons during his administration of the Netherlands;[1] Llorente may be overstating, but he had been secretary in the Inquisition and had access to the secret archives, and he states that 31,000 persons were burnt, and 290,000 'otherwise punished' in Spain—after the Inquisition was reorganised in 1481; and the Inquisition, which had been founded by Innocent III in 1208, was only one of the agencies of torture. In

[1] A. H. Johnson, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century*, Rivingtons, 1897, p. 334.

V.—Two Devils Roasting a Soul
(*Worcester Cathedral*)

England it is the boast of the common law that it never recognised torture as legal; but torture was practised all the same, and continued after the Reformation until it finally disappeared in the eighteenth century. In France it was not completely abolished till the Revolution.

And we have to admit, humbly and penitently, that the Churches bear the chief blame. It was the clergy, and the monks especially (whose inhumanity Montesquieu once discussed as a common psychological phenomenon), "who were at once the instigators and the agents of that horrible detailed persecution." We have to face this ugly truth, setting beside it the saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"; we have also to face the fact, which Lecky makes clear, that "the abolition of torture was a movement almost entirely due to the opponents of the Church," [1] such as Montaigne, Voltaire, and the *Encyclopédistes*: and the only honest answer for us is to admit that the religion which established itself by such methods was not the religion of Christ, and that the clergy had for ages had their minds distorted and their humanity smothered by the belief in hell and the protracted contemplation of its atrocities.

Yet it may be doubted whether this physical torment has produced as much human misery as the mental anguish which countless millions have endured throughout their lives from the constant dread of hell, the 'second death.' Men fear death still; but what must that fear have been like when there was an infinitely worse death to dread? We have seen

[1] *Op. cit.*, i, pp. 327, 346, 330–1.

a glimpse of it in Dr. Johnson. It can be traced everywhere. It stains the brightness of St. Francis' "Song of the Creatures," which ends, in the original version :—

Praised be my Lord for our sister the death of the body, from which no man can escape : woe to those who die in state of mortal sin ; blessed are they who shall be found conformed to thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm.

Even the sceptical did not escape Hamlet's "dread of something after death" ; and we can measure the terror of that second death in the deepening gloom of Michelangelo's sonnets—"Burdened with years, and full of sins, in evil habit inveterate, I see myself draw nigh to both the deaths"—

> Carico d'anni e di peccati pieno,
> E nel mal uso radicato e forte,
> Vicin mi veggio all' una e all' altra morte,
> E in parte il cuor nutrisco di veleno.[1]

X. The Passing of Hell

Few educated people at the present day trouble their heads about everlasting damnation or the fires of hell. The science of history—the chief of all new instruments of thought—which did not come to light till the eighteenth century, has gradually brought all knowledge into its domain, from biology to biblical criticism : it is now permeating the general mass of civilisation, and has already altered men's sense of proportion and their gauge of truth.

Side by side with the intellectual revolution there

[1] Sonnet XLVII.

has come a change of heart, which is difficult to account for except on religious grounds. Civilised man has come to hate cruelty. It would seem that, as the free exercise of reason, no longer held down by the torture-chamber, has begun to remove the cerements of tradition from the Gospel of Christ, and as the facts about his life have been disseminated through vernacular Bibles, the Christian religion has gradually come to be realised in something like its true character, as the religion of love functioning through sympathy, pity, and service. With the advent of Christianity indeed pity had been proclaimed a virture ; but it failed to conquer the unregenerate barbarity of man, and it disappeared—in spite of countless heroic and consecrated lives—before its twin enemies, persecution and the Legend of Hell.

We understand now that cruelty is the vilest form of human selfishness ; but until recent times a man could be cruel without offending against any of the accepted canons of morality. Cruelty is not among the Seven Deadly Sins of the medieval standard, and it is not specified in the Ten Commandments. In the Middle Ages, sin was studied and analysed with extraordinarily subtle thoroughness ; but cruelty almost escaped notice : in the *Ayenbite of Inwit*, for instance, there is nothing nearer to it than anger, which is analysed into chiding, wrath, hate, strife, vengeance, murder, war, but has nothing against the passionless infliction of pain ; and, as we have seen, the history of civil and religious persecution shows that our ancestors had undeveloped minds on the subject. War was indeed theoretically condemned, as was the unauthorised shedding of blood ; but our

ancestors would not have understood our present international efforts to abolish war; nor would it have appeared probable, as late as a hundred years ago, that the individual warfare of the duel would disappear, together with vindictive legal punishments, hanging and flogging for slight offences, and barbarous amusements, which also were once as universally practised as they are now almost universally reprobated.

One result of this remarkable change is that it is no longer necessary to argue with intelligent people about the wrongfulness of the idea of endless torment: it has disappeared with the cruelty which engendered it. During the latter half of the nineteenth century there was a strenuous battle for universalism; but the weapons are now laid by, because the battle has been won in the Reformed Churches and among that large population which stands outside. Yet much evil remains, even among those Churches that are free to discard obsolete ideas. It is still believed in a vague way by many that some kind of barbarous punishment is countenanced in some of the sayings of Christ—though this is generally softened into phrases about his 'sternness'—and many think that 'there is something in it.' Perhaps these notions are not often clearly thought out, and are seldom faced; but they remain as a kind of fitful flame about the Christian religion, because they are not openly repudiated. Christendom is not so free from the ancient abominations as we are sometimes apt to think.

The Legend of Hell is thus still a powerful enemy of the Christian religion, as it has for generations

been the most general cause of the widespread repudiation of the Churches which marks the modern era. Devout people sometimes wonder why Christianity has so many enemies. If the more obvious superstitions provide some of the causes, the relics of hell provide the most potent of all, because they are not openly denounced. This was often pointed out in the last century, as for instance :—

A penalty which to our reason and moral sense seems shocking, and monstrous, loses all force as a threat. It has ever been thus in the case of human punishments. And so in the case of Hell. Outwardly believed, it has ceased to touch the conscience, or greatly to influence the life of Christians. To the mass of men it has become a name and little more (not seldom a jest) ; to the sceptic it has furnished the choicest of his weapons ; to the man of science a mark for loathing and scorn. . . . It has done, and is daily doing, more to spread and harden unbelief than all other causes put together. It enlists on the side of scepticism, the highest and best part of our nature, its moral forces. It has turned God into a fiend and a tyrant.[1]

At the present day we should perhaps rather say that many who were called agnostics or secularists, or even atheists (an accusation often made also against the early Christians) were in reality fighting for a purer idea of God. There can be few of us who have not met those who would not call themselves Christians and yet were nearer to the spirit of Christ than ourselves ; nor can we read the criticisms of the old opponents of the Church without acknowledging the

[1] T. Allin, *Universalism Asserted*, Elliot Stock, 3rd ed., 1888, pp. 5, 345.

justice of much that they said, and confessing that they, and men like the Friends, led the way in removing the worst cruelties, oppressions, and scandals which stained the face of Christendom in the eighteenth century. Voltaire and Gibbon were the two greatest examples of this spirit; and both left the Roman Catholic Church to devote their lives to devastating criticism. The process continued in the nineteenth century and is not yet entirely finished. We can see it exemplified in Shelley, who was really, as his writings show, the pioneer of a more spiritual religion, when he wrote in his youthful pamphlet on "The Necessity of Atheism," in 1811 :—

Jesus Christ would hardly have liked as an example of all that is gentle and beneficent and compassionate, a Being who shall deliberately scheme to inflict on a large portion of the human race tortures indescribably intense and indefinitely protracted; who shall inflict them too, without any view of future good—merely because he is just.

The revolt against the traditional doctrine was felt not less abroad, and may be summed up in the words of George Sand, "The Church of Rome has received her death-blow from her own hand; on the day that she made God implacable, and damnation eternal, she consummated her suicide."[1] It was the doctrine of eternal punishment that had driven Shelley's contemporary, James Mill, from Christianity, and caused his son to pen the famous words :—

I will call no Being good who is not what I mean by good when I use that word of my fellow-creatures;

[1] George Sand, *Spiridion*, Eng. trans., London, 1842, p. 286.

and if there be a Being who can send me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.

With the comment :—

> Any other of the outrages to the most ordinary justice and humanity involved in the common Christian conception of the moral character of God sinks into insignificance beside this dreadful idealisation of wickedness.[1]

It was not our Lord Jesus Christ who taught these monstrous ideas which philosophers and poets have for two centuries been exposing. But there are passages in the Old Testament which at first sight may seem to give some countenance to them, until we realise that they have no reference to a future life at all : there are also flaming outbursts of Jewish apocalyptic poetry in books like Revelation, which the duller type of mind might take with undue literality : and further, there are sayings or fragments of sayings attributed to Jesus himself which for long seemed to contradict the general tenor of his message. Such passages had been exaggerated into a thorough perversion of his teaching. Then, as people became more civilised, these passages, fixed by familiarity in all their distortion, became to an increasing number of thinking men an obstacle which made impossible any acceptance of him as the saviour of mankind. Many left the Christian religion ; others clung to it, feeling that there must be some explanation somewhere for the anomaly ; but it was not till the main results of New Testament criticism were established that the explanation was forthcoming.

[1] J. S. Mill, *Three Essays*, London, 1874, p. 114. (James Mill died in 1836 ; John Stuart Mill in 1873.)

The majority, not so long ago, were content to expect heaven for themselves and to promise hell to others ; but the nobler spirits, who argued from the goodness and power of God and the better instincts of human nature, were troubled, for they were confronted with texts which were believed to be the actual unaltered words of Christ. They put the best interpretation on these that they could ; but, although much could be swept away on the ground of mistranslation, there still remained passages which gave support to their opponents. Even as late as 1880 hermeneutics were still so much in the pre-scientific stage that a very learned man like Pusey could assume, apparently without fear of contradiction, that for the name of St. Matthew there could be " substituted the Name of our Redeemer " ; and therefore that, " if we know anything at all, we know that the doctrine of Everlasting Punishment was taught by Him Who died to save us from it." [1]

But now the knowledge which has accumulated about the origin and structure of the Gospels is making it clear that these passages are additions to the original record. To explain this is the main purpose of our essay. The work needs doing ; for most people still read the Bible without commentaries, unfortunately ; and there has been no official revision of the English New Testament since 1881. The intelligent layman has not the time to study the field of modern scholarship ; the average parson has not the money to buy the necessary library ; and no book exists, so far as I know, which deals with the subject of eternal punishment in

[1] E. B. Pusey, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?* Parker and Rivingtons, 3rd ed., 1880, p. ix.

the light of the literary knowledge now accepted by scholars. Indeed even among scholars themselves the implications of knowledge so recently acquired are not always remembered, and sometimes perhaps not always perfectly assimilated. The eminent Jewish writer, Mr. Claude Montefiore, for instance, while deeply admiring the character of Jesus, assumes that he accepted, though he did not invent, the " horrible doctrine that many go to ' destruction ' and few to ' life eternal ' " ; and also the " truly horrible doctrine " that " he who is once in hell will always remain there " ; doctrines which are repudiated by modern orthodox Judaism—" To us, who have been taught from our childhood the infinite mercy of God, there can be no sin for which there can be no forgiveness. We do not believe in eternal punishment." [1]

It is unnecessary to point out instances from Christian writers amongst us who illustrate a similar difficulty. While even the most conservative scholars agree that certain passages are editorial additions to the sayings of Jesus, these same passages are constantly quoted as if they were his teaching, even by otherwise careful writers ; and, besides this, books continue to be read because of their high intrinsic value, which contain statements that have been superseded, sometimes by the authors themselves. For instance, the intelligent layman anxious to enquire into the subject of hell might naturally turn to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.[2] The index refers him to the article on Eschatology in the ninth volume. There he will find

[1] C. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, Macmillan, 1909, pp. 550, 1005, 118. The points he refers to are discussed below on pp. 37–41, 233–5, 251–2.

[2] 11th ed., 1910.

a list of texts, set down without any indication of their position in the scale of authenticity, such as present-day commentaries would give him, if he had the time to look them up.[1] It may be worth while to give one definite instance of this: On page 762 of the *Encyclopædia*, Dr. Garvie points out, as so learned a man would naturally do, that in the Fourth Gospel the Judgment is conceived as an 'internal experience'; but he says that this Gospel also treats it as a Second Coming of Christ to judge the world, and he refers to John 21 : 22. But in his admirable book written twelve years later, *The Beloved Disciple*, Dr. Garvie says of this whole twenty-first chapter that he "finds it quite impossible to regard the Appendix as the work of the evangelist."[2] John 21 : 22 in fact does not represent the opinion of the evangelist, and the words, "If I will that he tarry till I come," are a later editorial gloss, inconsistent with that opinion.

What is a poor layman to do?—or a parson either, if he cannot buy many new books and does not possess rather expensive aids like Thompson's Clarendon Press *Synoptic Gospels* which sets all the text in parallel columns. In the article to which we have just referred the enquirer will find the whole list of gnashings of teeth, quenchless fires, and undying worms, set down without any suggestion that modern scholarship has something to say about these phrases—as the reader will observe if he proceeds a little further in our attempt to bring the light to bear upon the most monstrous of all legends—the Legend of Hell.

[1] E.g., Mt. 25 : 41, which is printed below on page 233.
[2] A. E. Garvie, *The Beloved Disciple*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1922, p. 30.

CHAPTER II

CAUSES AND HISTORY OF THE HELL DOCTRINE

I. Introduction

IT is remarkable how little those writers who are known as the Fathers are quoted at the present day even by conservative theologians. Down to the end of the last century, their opinions on the future state were ransacked and eagerly canvassed even by liberals like Farrar, who yet were not so very far from agreement with Milton when he spoke of " the obscure and entangled wood of Antiquity, Fathers and Councils, fighting one against another." In practice to-day theologians of all shades seem content to put these ancient writers quietly on one side, not so much because of the ' knotty Africanisms,' ' pampered metaphors,' ' intricate and involved sentences,' ' fantastick and declamatory flashes,' of which Milton complained, as because we have outgrown their philosophy, their science, and their methods of exegesis.

Yet if we were merely to say that the Church has never committed itself to the doctrine of eternal punishment, which is true, we should be giving a false impression, unless we also said that nearly everyone believed in the doctrine, and that the great majority of the Fathers taught it in some form or other.

An attempt to go into their opinions in detail would be too much for the patience of a modern reader, and would be misleading, since their statements are for the most part so ' intricate ' and contradictory that they cannot be satisfactorily summarised. If the reader is curious in the matter, he can study the

ramifications of the patristic argument in the controversy of Pusey and Farrar, who came to quite different conclusions as to what the Fathers really did mean,[1] while for the only ancient Christian writers whose thought is much valued at the present day, the Platonists of Alexandria, the work of the late Professor Bigg may be consulted.[2]

Some idea however should here be given of the development of opinion ; and the following summary may perhaps serve. In St. Clement of Rome, at the end of the first century, there is nothing. In the second century, the Matthæan phrase, eternal fire, is used and accepted by St. Ignatius, Polycarp, by the 'Shepherd of Hermas,' Justin Martyr, and Irenæus, but is not developed : considering that the phrase was supposed to be an actual saying of Christ, it is perhaps remarkable that more is not made of it ; a fair example is, "each will suffer punishment by eternal fire, according to the demerit of his actions."[3] It is in the third century that some writers begin to go beyond the quotation from Matthew, and to expatiate on the subject of fire, as in the "devouring punishment of lively flames" and "infinite tortures" of Cyprian : this is sometimes as a counterblast to the pagan persecutors, Tertullian, already quoted,[4] being the chief example. It is noticeable that Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine were all Carthaginians, springing from

[1] E. B. Pusey, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?* Parker and Rivingtons, 1880. F. W. Farrar, *Mercy and Judgment*, Macmillan, 1881.

[2] C. Bigg, *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Clarendon Press, 1886.

[3] Justin, *Apol. I*, 17. A careful collection of the instances is made by Pusey, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–287.

[4] On p. 33. Throughout this paragraph I am endeavouring to summarise Pusey's catena.

the provinces of Africa and Numidia, and that Carthage had a bad name for cruelty even in the hard pagan world.

But besides these examples, there is still but little that goes beyond the Matthæan formula. In the fourth century, Pusey's catena shows St. Athanasius as content to quote Matthew, and no more ; but Hilary takes a step forward by saying that the heathen will have material bodies in order that matter may be provided for the eternal fire : and other Fathers are more eloquent : St. Basil's touches, however, only go a little way beyond Matthew ; and St. Ambrose considers that the sufferings are not material ; even the eloquent Chrysostom restrains his powers before the subject. The Fathers believed on the whole in everlasting punishment, but with much inconsistency ; universalist sayings can be got out of St. Ambrose and others, while St. Jerome seems to have believed that *Christians* would all ultimately be saved : he says also that opinions differ considerably, that some of his friends expect the conversion of the devil, and he mentions without disapproval those who hold that all punishment will come to an end.[1]

There was in fact another school of thought, led by the greatest intellects of the patristic era, St. Clement of Alexandria and Origen, which combined the idea of age-long punishment with that of ultimate salvation for all. Augustine bears witness to this, when he speaks of " our merciful ones " (*nostri misericordes*), and says that " some, or rather very many, believe that eternal punishment will not take place." [2] There are

[1] *In Esaiam*, xviii, xxiv, lxvi.
[2] *De Civit. Dei*, xxi, 17, 20. *Enchiridion*, c. iii.

in Augustine's works some attempts at mitigation and graduation of pain, and he avoids the grosser brutalities which were soon to become a commonplace of theology ; but he was uncompromisingly on the side of eternal damnation ; and Western Christendom has followed him in the main for nearly fifteen centuries. The East, more philosophical and less literalistic, suffered less from the hardening and coarsening of thought.

II. Causes of the Developments

Before we pass to the painful subject of the intellectual and moral defects which caused the misinterpretation of Christ's teaching, let us pause to acknowledge the debt we owe to the heroic men who defied the power of Imperial Rome, and built for us the foundations of Christendom. Little or no harm would have been done, if their writings had been treated from the beginning in the historical spirit ; but the historical spirit did not exist. It is not their fault that their imperfect attempts to grasp the immense revelation of our Lord were treated as if they were divine oracles, and handed down as an almost infallible deposit to the modern world, and accepted thus by theologians as recent as the saintly and learned Pusey. Of the Fathers it might be said, as of all of us, that they saw as in a mirror darkly, " for we know in part, and we prophesy in part : but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away." They had not understood all ; they could not write as Paul, or Luke, or John ; and in that degree the Christian spirit receded in their hands. But they understood enough to struggle through the agonies of pagan persecution, and in their weakness to confound the

strong : they fought the slavery and corruption of the Roman Empire ; they spread abroad a spirit of charity that was a new thing in the world, they laid the foundations of democracy, and they gradually abolished slavery and the heartless neglect of the weak, which had disgraced ancient civilisation ; they tamed the new hordes of barbarians, who swept over the whole Empire and became its rulers ; and they won through the desperate struggle of the breaking up of the ancient world, by proclaiming in word and deed a new single-hearted devotion and love which they had learnt from Jesus, and a spirit of self-sacrifice unknown before and never since surpassed.

But the defects of these ages and of those which succeeded them were great ; and these defects showed themselves at their worst in that doctrine which is of greater importance than any other, because it concerns the character of God and the ultimate condition of the human race.

1. *The Motive of Fear*

The first cause of the evil which calls for mention is the idea that the fear of hell frightens people into being good. " The fear of hell peoples heaven " is an old saying which was quoted so recently as by Dr. Pusey more than once with approval.[1] No better example of this can be given than the splendid Chrysostom. There is some universalism in his voluminous works,[2] but he rebukes those who ' deny hell,' and he is con-

[1] E. B. Pusey, *op. cit.*, pp. viii, 19, 283, etc.

[2] There is a collection of references, both to universalism and hell, from the works of Ambrose and Chrysostom, in A. Jukes, *The Second Death*, Longmans, 3rd. ed., 1873, pp. 185–9. Pusey, *op. cit.*, gives the references to hell, *in loc.*

vinced that most men could not be made virtuous without terrible threats. " To remember hell prevents our falling into hell," he says ; and that nothing is so profitable as to converse concerning hell. Indeed he seems to make of hell a myth for the promotion of universal salvation, for he says, " For this cause did God threaten hell, that none may fall into hell, that all may obtain the Kingdom : for this cause we too make mention continually of hell." [1]

This mistaken psychology and dubious ethic seems to have been universal in the ancient world ; and the discovery of Jesus that virtue comes in quite another way has been long in winning acceptance. Augustine went so far as to say that a man seldom or never comes to believe in Christ save under the influence of terror ; and countless writers and preachers have followed on the same line. Thus we find medieval writers like Comines naïvely saying that if only everyone would realise what hell torments are like, the whole world would become virtuous.

For this reason it is sometimes impossible to find out the real opinions of the Fathers. Not having our modern idea of the sanctity of truth, teachers would practise ' economy.' What that is, let them explain for themselves. Even the great and saintly Origen said : " All that might be said on this subject it is not suitable to explain now, or to all. For the many need no further teaching than the punishment of sinners. For it is not expedient to go further, because of those whom even the fear of eternal punishment can scarcely restrain from unmeasured recklessness." [2] And

[1] Chrysostom, *Hom.* xxxi on Rom. 16 : 16 ; *Hom.* ii on 2 Thess. 1 : 8 (cf. *Hom.* xv and *Hom.* viii) ; *Hom.* vi on Phil. 2 : 5.
[2] *Contra Celsum*, vi, 26.

Jerome said that mitigations of punishment " must now be hidden from those for whom fear is useful, so that by dreading punishment they may cease from sin." [1]

2. *The Doctrine of Exclusive Salvation*

The doctrine of exclusive salvation, a corruption of the splendid enthusiasm of the early Church, had as its inevitable corollary the doctrine of the damnation—and almost inevitably also, of the everlasting damnation—of heretics and unbelievers : indeed, if we are to take the Athanasian Canticle literally,[2] all Eastern Orthodox Christians without doubt will perish eternally, because they do not accept the words " and of the Son " in the verse about the procession of the Holy Ghost. A doctrine which warps the moral sense, like that of exclusive salvation, grows in its distorting effects ; and heresy, which was often nothing more than the refusal to accept the dominant theology of the age, was regarded as the most heinous of crimes ; and the temptation to magnify hell as a dissuasive against heretics was a powerful incentive, long before their systematic extermination was begun in Provence.

A striking example of the way in which the teaching of Christ was nullified by allegory may be cited in this connection. The Parable of the Good Samaritan is very simple, and its meaning, one would think, unmistakable. The lesson is one of mercy and kindness ; but it is also conveyed by our Lord so as to teach that the duty of love to our neighbour extends to the

[1] *In Esaiam*, lxvi.

[2] In its Western form. The Eastern Churches accept the Canticle (in its Eastern form) as a statement of doctrine, but do not recite it in their services.

heretic and foreigner : " Who is my neighbour ? " was the question ; and the parable answered it by telling of a heretical Samaritan, who, when the clergy passed by, proved neighbour to him that fell among thieves. But, from Augustine onwards, the theologians entirely perverted the meaning. The man who fell among thieves represented, they said, fallen man ; he was on his way to Jericho, which is the state of human perdition (for does not ' Jericho ' mean ' the moon,' and is not the moon the type of changefulness ?) ; the thieves were of course his sins, sent by the devil ; they stripped him of his immortality ; the Priest and the Levite were the Mosaic law, which could not free him from sin ; the Good Samaritan was Christ (for does not ' Samaritan ' in Hebrew mean ' guardian ' and must not ' guardian ' mean the Saviour ?) ; and, lastly, the inn to which the wounded man was brought was of course the Church, which by the sacraments could absolve and restore him. I have myself heard the parable interpreted in that way from a French pulpit : in the Middle Ages there was no other way ; this was the explanation of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, and we can see it still proclaimed with ingenious clarity in the stained glass of Bourges, Sens, Chartres, and Rouen.

3. *Mendacity*

The doctrine of exclusive salvation inevitably led also to a mendacity which became unabashed and universal to an extent that we can hardly imagine. If salvation could only be obtained by the performance of certain rites and the acceptance of certain theories (which was the unethical belief), it was difficult to avoid the conclusion that there was no harm in

making the theories seem as strong as possible, and that therefore misrepresentation of the truth was justified. Thus the moral sense of both teachers and people was undermined, and thought was poisoned at its source. The truth would be misrepresented by one writer, facts suppressed, and all impartial investigation avoided, and the next generation would accept the result as true; later ages added forgeries and other 'pious frauds' of their own: and as time went on, attempts to recover the truth were suppressed by persecution. This deadly principle of mendacity was defended by many of the Fathers, Augustine being a distinguished exception. Chrysostom, for instance, has a panegyric on the habit of telling lies in his Treatise on the Priesthood; and, to quote the words of Cardinal Newman, "The Greek Fathers thought that, when there was a *justa causa*, an untruth need not be a lie. St. Augustine took another view, though with great misgiving. . . . Now, as to the just cause, the Greek Fathers make them such as these—self-defence, charity, zeal for God's honour, and the like." [1] There is little in the way of fraud that could not be covered by zeal for God's honour and the like; and, as Lecky says, mendacity 'triumphed wherever the supreme importance of dogmas was held. Generation after generation it became more universal; it continued till the very sense of truth and the very love of truth seemed blotted out from the minds of men" [2]; history became a tissue of the wildest fables, apocryphal Gospels were

[1] J. H. Newman, *Apologia*, London, 1864, app., p. 77. He might truthfully have added Latin Fathers to the Greek.
[2] W. E. H. Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*, Longmans, 1910, p. 397.

invented to cover the reticence of the genuine Gospels about the mother of Jesus, other documents were forged to support every new departure from his religion; theology in general became a soil of misrepresentation in which magic and mythology flourished; credulity was held to be a high virtue and the spirit of enquiry a most abhorred crime. In such an atmosphere it was inevitable that the doctrine of exclusive salvation should have developed the ideas about hell in their worst form, sharpening the other motives which we are considering, and reducing biblical exegesis to fantasy and evasion.

4. *Misunderstanding of the Bible*

The theologians of the patristic period and their successors regarded the whole Bible as one solid infallible block; their ideas of inspiration were mechanical; and they were without the conception of development. Thus to them a cry like that at the end of Psalm 104, "Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more," was a decree of God, and an unanswerable proof of the existence of hell. Protestantism indeed in its bibliolatry only carried on the immemorial tradition, and with some real improvement: the older writers had extracted meanings from the books of Scripture which were remote from what their authors had intended to be understood, and this became worse as the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek was lost; their use of allegory had been always fantastic to an incredible degree, but they could be literal when a point was to be forced. The Bible was better treated

after the Renaissance, and in Protestant countries the people could read it for themselves; and it was then that the old ideas about hell began, very slowly, to crumble.

It is difficult to extenuate the guilt of those who had spread those ideas in earlier times. They could not have interpreted their texts as they did unless they had often been really misguided and cruel. There was little excuse for seeing hell in passages that had no reference at all to the future life, such as Isaiah 33 : 14 :—" The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling hath surprised the godless ones. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? " As a matter of fact, they made the Bible say what they wanted. Augustine had laid down the principle that when a passage could not be literally interpreted in a way consonant with the doctrines of the Church or the dignity of the Creator, it was to be treated as an enigma, and its true purport was to be sought in its 'spiritual' meaning[1]; but they saw no spiritual meaning in the word 'fire.' It is significant to contrast with them William Law, in the extract quoted below (p. 114), who made the best and not the worst of texts which were then difficult to reconcile with the goodness of God.

Let us look at an example of the old exegesis. St. Bernardino of Siena is one of the most attractive and popular of the Franciscan saints: kindly and benevolent by nature, he was not only one of the greatest preachers of the Middle Ages, but was also a learned scholastic; and he thus explains from holy

[1] *De Genesi, contra Manichæos*, ii, 2.

Scripture the delight of the saved at the torments of the damned :—

Even as continual praise of thanksgiving shall everlastingly resound his mercy in those that are saved, even so shall wailing and lamentation, sighs and bellowings and cries resound his justice in the damned ; therefore, to the ears of the blessed, hell shall sing to Paradise with ineffable sweetness. Nor would there be in that place a pleasant and completely perfect sweetness of musical song, if the infernal descant from God's justice were lacking to the chant of his mercy : as it is written in Psalm [101] : *"I will sing of mercy and judgment."*

And he further proves his point by misquoting, as well as ludicrously misapplying, Miriam's chorus in Exodus 15 : 21 :—

Nor is any solemnity complete which hath chant alone, without organ or descant. Therefore, together with the saints of the realms above, *"let us sing unto the Lord in glory, for he hath cast the horse and his rider,"* to wit, the wicked and the devils, *"into the sea"* of the torments of hell.[1]

The New Testament was treated in the same fantastic and sibylline way, and seemed blazing with hell-fire to men who could find arguments for hell in the harem of King Solomon (p. 61). But here there was another fatal mistake. Augustine had fixed upon the Church the idea that Matthew was the primary authority, abbreviated by Mark. It was therefore taken for granted that the Matthæan glosses about

[1] *Sermo III, post* 1, *Dom. Quad.* (Venice, 1745, p. 77), tr. G. G. Coulton.

fire (especially Mt. 25 : 41, which was continually rubbed in) were the original sayings of Jesus, and that the silence in the other evangelists implied consent, and that all their other divergencies from Matthew must be explained away. So long as Augustine's authority caused the priority of Matthew to be accepted, scientific exegesis was impossible.

5. *Ignorance of Jewish Apocalyptic*

The patristic writers and their followers were not cognisant of the Jewish apocalyptic background, which colours especially the Gospel according to Matthew ; and if they had known about it, their fixed idea of a divine oracle, to be diverted when convenient by allegory, would have blinded them to the understanding of poetry, and to the distinction between a metaphor and a legislative enactment. Thus they interpreted Oriental hyperbole without reference to the atmosphere in which it had been coined. This was specially the case with the Latin theologians, who were the chief promoters of the hell doctrine : they threw the picturesque imagery into a rigid mould of literalistic legalism : and the whole confusion was made worse in the case of Augustine (who is chiefly responsible for fixing the hell doctrine upon Christendom), by the fact that he was an African who never shook off the effects of his training as a Manichee ; and who shrank, as he himself laments in his *Confessions* (i, 14), from the labour of thoroughly learning Greek—so much so that it has even been questioned whether he could read the New Testament in its original language.

6. *Credulity*

Before the invention of printing, books had something of the sanctity of relics; and before the discovery of the historical principle, a book acquired a status almost of infallibility when it was very ancient; criticism and experimental science being unknown, far-reaching principles were established by a reference to a remark by Jerome or Augustine, or indeed by Aristotle or Cicero.

And the world was flooded with apocryphal writings, which were accepted uncritically, the sense of truth being, as we have said, much in abeyance. It may be worth giving an instance of this. Most cathedral and other churches in the later Middle Ages set lurid pictures of hell before the people, and these pictures were derived from apocryphal sources. The *Apocalypse of Peter*, recently rediscovered (see p. 184), which contains the earliest description of hell and is attributed to the second century, was quoted as Scripture by St. Clement of Alexandria in the third—a significant example of the difficulties under which early writers laboured. It was subsequently lost; but the *Vision of St. Paul*, of about the fourth century, which was in part derived from it, was translated into Latin in the eighth century, and was afterwards rendered into French, English, and other languages. In this vision, St. Paul—precursor of Dante in the *Divina Commedia*—finds trees of fire, on the branches of which are hung the damned by the hands, feet, ears, and tongue. Next he sees seven furnaces from which issue the howlings of the impenitent; he then passes to a wheel of fire, which turns a thousand times a day,

VI.—Tortures of the Damned
(*From Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*)

and at each revolution tortures a thousand souls: passing through other scenes of torment which remind one further of Dante, he comes to a Tantalus scene, where those who have broken their fast during their lifetime vainly try to drink and to seize the fruits which grow by the river. Lastly he comes to the smoke and stench of the abyss into which are cast those who would not believe in Christ: they disappear into the horror, and God himself forgets them. St. Paul begs God for a little mercy; and prevails upon him at last to grant a respite each week from Saturday evening until the beginning of Sunday.

The way in which legends gradually became established facts is well illustrated by the visions of hell. The *Vision of St. Brendan* (who did not get very far, but saw Judas, who passed each week as molten lead but became corporeal for the week-end) was translated into French in the twelfth century, and so was the more detailed *Vision of the Knight Owen*; in 1149 appeared the *Vision of Tundal*, which added many new horrors, such as the monster that swallows his victims, and afterwards spews them up,[1] whereupon they become pregnant and give birth to fiery serpents which turn upon them. In the thirteenth century these visions were widely spread, but theologians like Aquinas said that such things must be taken in a symbolic sense; by the fourteenth they were accepted literally in many quarters, and pictures were made from them. In the fifteenth century they are treated as true descriptions of the torments of the damned, and pass into the official realm of monumental art: in the portals of Nantes and Saint-Maclou

[1] This is represented in Plate VI: only the artist has etherialised it.

at Rouen, details from Tundal and the others can be identified, and in many other cases, such as the portals of Bourges and Berne, the wild dreams of these Celtic writers have come to be elevated " almost to the dignity of dogmas." [1]

As a writer in modern times has observed, " Toutes ces peintures, enfantées par le cerveau des poëtes, les théologiens nous les donnent comme des articles de foi." [2]

7. *Cruelty*

The ancient world was grossly and unimaginatively cruel. No principle of Christ has been longer in obtaining whole-hearted acceptance than that which is contained in the saying, " Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful." In many ways the Fathers lessened the evil because they grasped the great Christian truth of the infinite value of every human soul; but the ancient idea of vengeance was not repudiated, nor was cruelty classed as a deadly sin—indeed heresy came to be treated as the one great sin to be avoided; and when there was another set up so as to belittle everything else, unchastity was often the sin chosen,—traces of which survive in the popular use of the words ' immoral ' and ' impure ' to-day: no one would use the phrase ' an immoral man ' or ' woman ' of one who had a lust for cruelty.

And we are obliged to mention here—for psychology warns us of its importance—the intimate connection of cruelty with sexual emotion, whether that emotion

[1] Émile Mâle, *L'Art religieux de la Fin du Moyen Age en France*, Paris, 1922, cap. iv, sec. iv.

[2] Collin Plancy, *Dictionnaire Infernal*, Paris, 1818, p. 212.

be debauched, or suppressed. Mr. Bertrand Russell has exaggerated in an unfair way when he involves religion itself in the perversion, as in the sentence, "The desire to see sin punished is merely a form of sadism, and one of the principal reasons why people cling to religion is that it affords justification to their sadistic impulses," [1] but in repudiating his generalisation as untrue and cruel, we have to admit that the element of sadism is involved in the otherwise inexplicable gloating over hell.

But the initial impulse was less unpleasant. Men like Tertullian were embittered by the atrocities of pagan persecution; and in the same way it may legitimately be urged that the reaction against centuries of Muslim oppression provides a partial excuse for the cruelty in Spain, as for that in Russia, and in the Balkans of a later age.

8. *Desire for Power*

The doctrine of eternal punishment gave enormous power to those who preached it; and the lust for power, stronger in those who live outside the civilising influences of the family, grew with the gradual establishment of clerical celibacy. The domination of the world by the clergy would in truth have been complete and irresistible if the laity had entirely believed in excommunication and hell; but the freedom of mankind was ultimately saved by a general undercurrent of lay scepticism, which often expressed itself in jest and ridicule.

None the less it was with hell as his weapon that Hildebrand established the power of the Papacy in

[1] In *Everyman*, vol. i, no. 15, May 9, 1929, p. 5.

the eleventh century, and with that mighty instrument all the clergy, from the lowliest hedge-priest to the highest in the hierarchy, could maintain their claims with a long-continued measure of success. As Lord Bryce said about Hildebrand, "With his authority, in whose hands are the keys of heaven and hell, whose word can bestow eternal bliss or plunge in everlasting misery, no other earthly authority can compete or interfere: if his power extends into the infinite, how much more must he be supreme over things finite? It was thus that Gregory and his successors were wont to argue: the wonder is, not that they were obeyed, but that they were not obeyed more implicitly."[1] And they had some justification in the wickedness of the earthly rulers with whom they had to contend. Only—would those rulers have been so wicked, if the clergy and bishops had appealed to the goodness in man, as Christ had done, instead of to his fears, and had taught God's mercy? Rulers who were told that part of the joy of heaven would be to see their enemies tortured[2] could hardly be expected to reform their savagery very much.

9. *Misunderstanding of Pain*

Behind the causes which we have suggested for the invention of hell was the scientific ignorance of the ancient world, an ignorance that increased after the last Greek inspiration had disappeared in the fourth century.[3] Men had always derived their ideas of the

[1] J. Bryce, *The Holy Roman Empire*, Macmillan, 1884, p. 161.
[2] See p. 34.
[3] See, e.g., Dr. Charles Singer's essay on "Science" in Hearnshaw's *Mediæval Contributions to Modern Civilisation*, Harrap, 1921, p. 110.

Deity, not from the innumerable contrivances for our well-being, which were easily ignored because they are common, but from those events which attracted universal attention because they were exceptional and terrific—plague, famine, earthquake, storm, lightning, fire, flood, disaster, and war. These were the manifestations of the gods, or of the Supreme God, and they were regarded as penal inflictions. Thus terror cast out the perfect love which had been the original theme of Christianity ; mechanical devices for ' salvation ' (which now meant escape) were invented and multiplied ; and the miserable condition of man and the frightful future that awaited him became the central ideas of theology.

In another way also, ignorance about the facts of nature has tended to harden men's ideas about God. Physical pain seemed wanton and meaningless ; and men thought of it as the heartless sport of the gods, or as their vengeance, or, when religion developed, as the punishment of God for sin. The word ' pain ' itself bears the record : it comes from the Greek *poinè*, a fine or ransom, vengeance, whence the Latin *pœna*, penalty, punishment, pain, and the Old French *peine*. *Punir* and *peine* in fact are derived from the same word, and share the meaning of punishment.

We now know that physical pain is the most merciful thing in nature ; for without the tiny bared nerve fibrils, which are the pain-points, we should have no warning of many dangers and diseases, and animal life would not be able to maintain itself. We know also that these pain-points are distributed with great reserve ; they are less abundant over the well-protected chest and back, and are entirely absent in

the heavily armoured brain. There is in fact as little pain as possible; and what there is exists in order to prevent worse evils. Nor does pain warn only: the message in reaching the brain passes through the spinal cord, which flings out an urgent summons to the part affected; and—in the case, for example, of the fingers touching a hot object—causes the muscles to jerk the fingers out of danger, before even the pain has reached the brain. Biology is teaching us the same lesson, that nature is never cruel with intention; and we are coming to understand that mental suffering also has a necessary relation to human progress.

Our modern knowledge thus falls in with the teaching of Christ that God is an infinitely careful and loving Father, designing the lilies, catering for the birds, noting each sparrow that falls to the ground, and numbering the very hairs of our heads. But the ancients had not our knowledge, and it was difficult for them to understand the divine intuition of Jesus, difficult to extricate themselves from the idea that pain is inflicted as punishment, or to realise that God is not a victim to the clumsy idea that virtue is promoted by vengeance.

10. *Distorted Ideas about God*

Thus, and finally, the bishops and clergy, though they were less pagan than their parishioners, and less unmerciful than the fierce monarchs and dukes, counts and barons, whom they endeavoured to restrain, were not ready to accept in its entirety Christ's revelation of God. They inherited the views

of the ancient world; and the very asceticism by which they tried to overcome its vices, tended to make them cruel to others as to themselves. Moreover, as the custom of enforced celibacy increased, they severed themselves more and more from God's plan for the education of his creatures by the love of parents for their children and for one another. Living outside the atmosphere of domestic affection, and untrained in the natural creative sacrifice of fatherhood, their sense of proportion was distorted, and they worshipped God from a peculiar angle. In this their religion was a retrogression from Judaism, which had always been centred in the divine institution of the family, wholesome about human relationships, and conspicuous, as it still is, for loyalty and affection. It must surely be because of this realisation of fatherhood that, although the idea of future retribution came into Christianity first through the old Jewish apocalyptic, the Jews have for long been able to boast that their belief in the Divine Father has freed them from belief in everlasting punishment.

It would not have been possible for the ferocious ideas of future vengeance, whether in hell or purgatory, to have fastened upon Christendom, if the theologians had not had an undeveloped idea of God. When Augustine said that some are saved to show God's mercy, others damned to show the truth of his vengeance (*veritas ultionis*), or when Jonathan Edwards said that God "will crush their blood out and make it fly, so that it will sprinkle his garment and stain all his raiment," [1] they showed that they had not realised

[1] Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, xxi, 12; J. Edwards, *Sermons*, London, 1817, vol. vii, p. 499.

the central revelation of Christ, the revelation of God's character, and were in fact imperfectly Christianised. To worship some sort of God is not enough. Christians have indeed never ceased to acknowledge that idolatry is a grievous sin ; but to worship a false god is worse than the childish vagaries of iconolatry ; and to set up the mother of Jesus as a mediator is but the inevitable result of the darkness which converted the Christ into a minister of vengeance and of wrath.[1] " Aboue hym schall be Crist his domesman," wrote John Mirk, about the year 1400 :—

Above him shall be Christ his doomsman so wroth, that no tongue can tell, for he dight no mercy ; within him his own conscience accusing him of the least thought that ever he did amiss ; his angel on that one side telling him redely when and how oft he hath done amiss : on that other side fiends challenging him hoarse as by right : under him hell yawning, and galping, and spitting fire and stench ready to swallow him unto the pain that never shall have end.[2]

III. Uncertainty about Hell

Yet the doctrine of everlasting punishment was not universally established, and never became the official teaching of the *whole* Church, though in practice the Medieval Church assumed it. At the Council of Florence, 1439, the major part of the Eastern Church almost came into line with the Latins in the matter ; for the Greek delegates agreed to the statements

[1] See Plates VII, VIII and IX.

[2] J. Mirk (or Myrc), ed. T. Erbe, Early English Text Society, 1905, *Liber ffestialis*, p. 4 (spelling modernised).

about both hell and purgatory. As we have seen, however (p. 55), on their return the delegates were repudiated for having accepted the proposed union with the Papacy; and the Patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria in 1443 issued an encyclical in which they condemned the Council of Florence as a council of robbers.[1]

The Eastern Orthodox Church continues to repudiate "the doctrine of a purgatorial fire," and to claim that the Roman Church ceased to be orthodox when this doctrine, and the *Filioque* clause in the creed, and other matters, were added.[2] In the *Answer of the Great Church* of 1896, hell is neither affirmed nor denied; but the Patriarch and his fellow bishops say that the Orthodox Church "prays and invokes the mercy of God for the forgiveness and rest of those 'which are fallen asleep in the Lord'; but the Papal Church from the twelfth century downwards has invented and heaped together in the person of the Pope, as one singularly privileged, a multitude of innovations concerning purgatorial fire," and the like.[3]

Although in the Dark and Middle Ages there had been a practical agreement in favour of everlasting punishment, there had always been two factors on the other side. The first was that the more humane and reasonable elements in theologians prevented them being quite consistent: for some it seems to have sufficed that hell existed as a threat. The result was,

[1] M. Creighton, *History of the Papacy*, Longmans, 1882, vol. ii. p. 192.

[2] *Answer of the Great Church of Constantinople to the Papal Encyclical on Union*, in the Original Greek with an English Translation, E. Metallinos, . . . The Orthodox Greek Community in Manchester. Oxford University Press, 1896, p. 25.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 34–5.

to quote the Benedictine editor of St. Ambrose, "What might seem almost incredible is the uncertainty and inconsistency of the Holy Fathers on the subject from the very times of the Apostles down to the pontificate of Gregory XI [1370] and the Council of Florence [1439], that is for nearly the whole of fourteen centuries. For not only do they differ the one from the other, as commonly happens in such questions not yet defined by the Church, but they are not even consistent with themselves." [1]

The second factor that made for uncertainty was the tradition of the more philosophically minded Greek Fathers who leant to universalism. Theologians could condemn Origen, and even, as some of them did, consign him to hell; but they could not entirely sweep away St. Clement and the rest of the Alexandrian school, or St. Gregory of Nyssa, the most outspoken of all, who taught that all evil would one day be blotted out, and who seems to have thought that the devil himself would ultimately be saved, or St. Gregory Nazianzen, who presided over the Second General Council, and was also among those who inclined to the doctrine of universal restoration. Even in the Middle Ages, when a knowledge of Greek was a very rare accomplishment and Neo-Platonism was almost forgotten, there was in the West a great man who knew Greek and who taught universal restoration, John Scotus Erigena, the one really original writer between the patristic period and the renaissance of the twelfth century.[2]

[1] In the *De Bono Mortis*.

[2] See H. B. Workman, *Christian Thought to the Reformation*, Duckworth, 1911, pp. 150 ff.

IV. Eternal Punishment and Catholic Doctrine

Thus it is that the Church as a whole has never committed itself to the doctrine of eternal punishment. The Roman Catholic Church unfortunately is bound by the Council of Trent to the doctrine of purgatory for good people in general, and hell for everyone else; but the rest of the Church is not. The first four General Councils are silent about the whole subject; and so are those which followed them, for that matter. Of the two Creeds, the Nicene, which is the standard of the Eastern Orthodox Church, is content to speak of the remission of sins, and the life of the world to come; it speaks also of a judgment, but declares of Christ's kingdom only that it shall have no end. The Apostles' Creed is also content to state the positive side, and in similar terms affirms the life, but not a death, everlasting.

The Apostles' Creed affirms also the Descent into Hades; and this certainly meant, at the time when the clause was inserted, the belief which had been held all along (by Ignatius, for example, and Justin Martyr), that Jesus had preached to the 'spirits in prison.' This belief we have discussed on pages 187–8; at its lowest it meant that some holy men who had had no opportunity of knowing Christ were released from their confinement in the intermediate state, at its best it could mean a general emptying of Hades.[1]

The *Te Deum* agrees with the creeds, with which

[1] The subject is discussed by Clemen, *Niedergefahren zu den Toten*, Giessen, 1900; and by Loofs in the *Transactions of the 3rd International Congress of the History of Religions*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1908, vol. ii, pp. 290–301.

it is rather closely related, in avoiding negative statements; and is content with the affirmation that Christ has opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers, and with the prayer that he, the Judge, may make his servants to be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting—and with these words the hymn (in its proper form) closes.

The *Quicunque vult*, or Athanasian Canticle, is strictly a hymn and not a creed. Of later date, it is not content with the reticence of the earlier forms, but reflects in some passages a violence not uncommon in fifth-century orthodoxy. Its so-called damnatory clauses caused it to be dropped altogether by the Episcopal Church of America as long ago as 1789. The English Revision of 1928, while retaining it in a corrected translation, no longer requires its use in the service. It may be urged that the canticle does not actually affirm that those that have done evil will remain for ever in the fire to which it consigns them (though no doubt this was what its author believed): it is fiercer and goes further than any other document of similar character; but it does not necessarily reach as far as the doctrine of endless punishment. Such explanations, however, must always savour of oversubtlety to the plain man, and the *Quicunque vult* is therefore unsuitable for use in church: its meaning may be mitigated, but the mentality of those who framed it and put it to liturgical use remains unmistakable. Besides this, one element is wholly indefensible: the statement, "Which faith except a man keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he will perish eternally" (enforced again at the end) does not explicitly say that the punishment is endless,

but it does commit those who repeat it to the doctrine, long since exploded among civilised people, that theological error is a crime—and a crime to be punished by penalties that at best are of a terrible nature.[1]

The Church in its entirety did in fact escape the disaster of condemning universalism, and avoided any œcumenical decision in favour of hell. At the same time it must be freely admitted that those who stood for more merciful and reasonable views have been, till times within living memory, only a select few. Throughout the Middle Ages hell in all its horrors was everywhere taught. Augustine's view was accepted in the main by the Reformers as well—that all human beings who lived before Christ were in unending torments (except the pious Jews and a few exceptional Gentiles, like Job and the Sybil, who were supposed to have believed in the future coming of Christ) ; and also all those since Christ who were unbaptised, or not in communion with the visible Church, or who failed to avail themselves of the escape afforded by repentance, faith, and the sacraments.

V. The Church of England and Hell

1. *The Case of Unbaptised Infants*

As by a miracle, the Church of England at the Reformation escaped the danger of committing herself to the doctrine of hell. Although Augustine had said that the pain of unbaptised infants in hell might be '*mitissima*' and others had emphasised the mildness of their

And see p. 85.

punishment for the crime of not having been christened before they died, yet they were in hell ; and Dante, as we have seen, places them in the first circle of his *Inferno*. Such had been the opinion since Augustine had asserted that those who are not with Christ must be with the devil (*De Peccat.*, i, 16) : one of the charges against Pelagius had been that he taught that infants dying unbaptised enjoy eternal life, though they do not enter the Kingdom of Heaven ; and the hideous old doctrine was reaffirmed by Calvin.

At the beginning of the English Reformation also the damnation of infants was reaffirmed, but only for six years. In the *Institution of a Christian Man* (' The Bishops' Book '), 1537, it was stated that after baptism " infants and children dying in their infancy shall undoubtedly be saved, and else not." These last fatal words, " and else not," were omitted in *The Necessary Doctrine* (' The King's Book ') of 1543. There is a reminiscence of this in the present Prayer Book rubric at the end of the Baptismal Service, which is derived from the First Prayer Book, 1549.

2. *The Thirty-nine Articles*

There was also a narrow escape over the Thirty-nine Articles. In 1553, the year after the Second Prayer Book, a forty-second article was drawn up, as follows:—

They also are worthy of condemnation who endeavour at this time to restore the dangerous opinion that all men, be they never so ungodly, shall at length be saved, when they have suffered pains for their sins a certain time appointed by God's justice.

In the same year King Edward died : and Mary came to the throne. In 1563, Convocation abolished this 42nd Article, and reduced the number to thirty-nine. It became therefore lawful to affirm the salvation of all men. Since then nothing has been put forth on the subject by the Church of England ; and it was mainly because of the discarding of this article that the case against Mr. Wilson, which is mentioned on page 121, was lost.

3. *The Prayer Book*

Thus the Church of England since the Reformation has been preserved from declaring herself in favour of eternal punishment, although it was certainly the accepted belief ; and in this she resembles the undivided Church of the early ages. There is no doubt whatever that those responsible for the first English Prayer Book believed in the crude medieval doctrine of everlasting fire ; and it is unlikely that any doubts had arisen among subsequent revisers, until the present Prayer Book was issued in 1662, and then only to a very small extent. Words and phrases occur in the present Prayer Book which must have meant everlasting punishment to those who wrote them, and to most of those who used them, the significant instances being : " From thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation " (Litany), which is not of compulsory recitation under the Revised Book of 1928, but might well have been more accurately rendered at the revision ; the *Quicunque vult*, which has been mentioned on page 104 ; " destruction both of body and soul " (Communion, First Exhortation) ; " sore punishment " (Second Exhortation)—both of

these need not be used under the Revised Book ; " Provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us " (Communion, Confession) ; in the Catechism our Lord's words are unnecessarily expanded from " Deliver us from evil " into " from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death "—an unscriptural phrase ; in the Visitation of the Sick the words occur, " and not be accused and condemned in that fearful judgment," also omitted in the Revised Book ; in the Burial Service the words (taken from a twelfth-century anthem, *Media vita*) occur, " deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death "—also an unscriptural phrase. The Commination Service is the place where threats are piled up in imposing rhetoric ; yet even here there is nothing more definite than the words from Matthew, " Go ye cursed, into the fire everlasting, which is prepared for the devil and his angels," and " the extreme malediction " ; and this exhortation also has been replaced by a very noble substitute in the Revised Prayer Book.

There is therefore enough in the Prayer Book to show what was in the minds of our forefathers, but no definite assertion of everlasting punishment ; and in the actual services as they are generally used to-day no words on the subject occur at all. It is also remarkable that the word ' hell ' only occurs in the sense of the abode of departed spirits (hades), when the words, " he descended into hell " occur in the Apostles' Creed, and thus only three times. As a place of punishment the word does not occur at all. And if we turn to the service when the Church looks specially forward to the mystery of the future life, the Burial of the Dead, we

find that heaven, and not hell or purgatory, is the theme. Indeed, the Burial Service has often been found fault with for " its unwarranted and dangerous hopefulness concerning the promiscuous multitude of those over whose graves it is used."

VI. The Church of England and Purgatory

There was, towards the end of the nineteenth century, a tendency among some Protestants to hanker after purgatory as a mitigation of hell. This was a mistake ; for the ' Romish doctrine,' as our 22nd Article calls it, was, as we have said on pages 61–6, not a mitigation of hell, but an added horror for those who, according to earlier Christian teaching, would go straight to heaven. Purgatory simply added periods of torment, stretching perhaps over enormous numbers of years, to the prospect of the normal virtuous man, and with such horrible vagueness that no one could ever think that he had spent enough on masses and indulgences. This is true, whether the ' Romish doctrine ' means that currently accepted in 1553, when the Article was written, or that more carefully defined in 1569 in the Catechism of the Council of Trent (Part I, art. v) as " the fire of purgatory in which the souls of just men [*piorum animæ*], being tormented [*cruciatæ*] for a definite time, are expiated."

There is indeed nothing merciful about the doctrine of purgatory. For a description of the belief which our Article condemned, we cannot do better than go to Sir Thomas More, a wise and exceptionally enlightened man, Lord Chancellor of England, and a martyr for his

convictions. Here is part of his description of purgatory from his *Supplication of Souls*, published in 1529 :—

If ye pity the lame, there is none so lame as we, that can neither creep one foot out of the fire, nor have one hand at liberty to defend our face from the flames. Finally, if ye pity any man in pain, never knew ye pain comparable to ours, whose life as far passeth in heat all other fires that ever burned on earth as the hottest of all that passed a feigned fire painted on a wall. . . . If ever ye lay sick, bethink you then what a long night we sely souls endure that lie sleepless, restless, burning and broiling in the dark fire one long night of many years together . . . our keepers are such as God keep you from—cruel, doomed spirits, odious, envious, and hateful despiteous enemies and dispiteful tormentors, and their company more terrible and grievous to be in than is the pain itself ; and the intolerable torment that they do us, wherewith from top to toe they cease not continually to tear us.

Our 22nd Article condemned this sort of thing as the "*Doctrina Scholasticorum*" in 1553 ; but in 1562 the opening words were altered to "*Doctrina Romanensium*" ; and the Article now reads in English :—

The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Reliques, and also invocation of Saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.

So, mercifully, the matter remained for Englishmen. The mystery of the future life was left as Christ had left it—a Father's house in which are many resting-places.

VII. The Development of Thought in England

1. *The Cambridge Platonists*

Although hell and purgatory were thus outside the official doctrine of the English Church in the reign of Elizabeth, no theologian criticised the idea of everlasting punishment, so far as is known, during the sixteenth century. Hooker indeed showed the way to better things by refusing to allow that people are damned for theological error ; and he was attacked for this by the Puritan, Penry, who said, " We hold that to him which dieth a papist, let him do ever so many good works . . . the very gates and portcullis of God's mercy are quite shut up." [1] The accepted axiom on either side was *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, and ' the Church ' of course always meant ' my Church.' Thus we find the Jesuit, Edward Knott, arguing against Chillingworth, " You admit that Romanists may be saved. We are sure that Protestancy unrepented destroys salvation." Therefore, he quaintly continues—and it was a common argument at the time—" is it not safer and wiser to be on the side of the Church which makes the loudest assertions that salvation is to be found in it and in it only ? " Chillingworth's answer, in his *Religion of Protestants*, 1638 (p. 36), contains a fine sentence which moves a good step beyond Hooker, " To say that God will damn men for errors as to such things, who are lovers of him and lovers of truth, is to rob man of his comfort and God of his goodness ; to make man desperate and God a tyrant."

[1] For extracts from Hooker, and later writers, etc., see E. H. Plumptre, *The Spirits in Prison*, Isbister, 1885, cap. v.

The revival of universalism begins with the Cambridge Platonists—Peter Sterry, who attended Cromwell on his death-bed, Jeremiah White, another of Cromwell's chaplains, Benjamin Whichcote, Henry More (the author of works in poetry and prose much valued by John Wesley and Coleridge), and Ralph Cudworth. Thus, as in Alexandria long before, the recovery came from the side of philosophy and in the name of Plato. Two extracts will give an idea of the thought of this group, which was based upon the certainty of God's infinite goodness. Henry More wrote: "The measure of providence is the divine goodness, which has no bounds but itself, which is infinite. . . . As much as the light exceeds the shadows so much do the regions of happiness exceed those of sin and misery." [1]

How modern their conception of God was is well illustrated in a beautiful passage by Jeremiah White. After saying that God's grace "will sooner or later superabound where sin hath most abounded," he continues:—

We must believe thee to be infinitely good; to be good without any measure or bound; to be good beyond all expression and conception of all creatures, or we must give over thinking of thee at all. All the goodness which is anywhere to be found scattered among the creatures is sent forth from thee, the fountain, the sea of all goodness. Into this sea of all goodness I deliver myself and all my fellow creatures. Thou art Love, and canst no more cease to be so than to be thyself: take thy own methods with us, and submit us to them. Well may we do so, in the assurance that

[1] H. More, *Divine Dialogues*, London, 1668, p. 479.

the beginning, the way, and the end of them all is love.[1]

Such a conception of God was in that age far ahead of men's thought. Hell and vengeance continued to hold the field. Till well on in the nineteenth century, a large proportion of Christians were Calvinists, who held with Augustine that the vast majority of mankind had been doomed by God, before ever they were born, to endless torment. Among those who were not Calvinists the medieval belief in endless punishment was also general. But the lamp lit at Cambridge did not go out. There are signs of it in the splendid but inconsistent prose of Jeremy Taylor († 1667) and also in Archbishop Tillotson († 1694) and Bishop Stillingfleet († 1699), who both held that God was not bound to fulfil a threatened sentence.

2. *William Law and Others*

A growing uneasiness continues in the more thoughtful theologians of the eighteenth century (e.g. Bishop, Butler, Isaac Watts, Doddridge, and Paley) as to the irreconcilability of endless punishment with the justice or goodness of God[2]; and some came out boldly against the accepted doctrine, notably Archbishop Wake († 1737), and the great William Law († 1761), who wrote, for instance, " Away then with the superstitious Dream of an *infinite* Wrath of God towards poor fallen Man," and " As for the purification of all

[1] J. White, *The Restoration of All Things*, published posthumously, London, 1712, pp. 246–7, in 1796. Jeremiah White lived 1629–1707.

[2] Instances are given in Farrar, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–56, 121, 276, 401; and Plumptre (for Butler), *op. cit.*, 332–40.

human nature, either in this world or in after ages, I fully believe it." [1]

Although the mistranslations were accepted in those days with little or no question, and the interpolations were unsuspected; yet the finest minds found their way as by a divine intuition to the truth which had been hidden for so long. William Law accepts yet pierces through the mistaken phraseology, and is not for a moment diverted from his conviction of the invincible love of God :—

And yet the Love that brought forth the existence of all things changes not through the fall of its creatures, but is continually at work to bring back all fallen nature and creature. All that passes for a time between God and his fallen creature is but one and the same thing, working for one and the same end, and though this is called ' wrath,' and that called ' punishment,' ' curse,' and ' death,' it is all from the beginning to the end nothing but the work of the first creating love, and means nothing else, and does nothing else, but those works of purifying fire, which must and alone can burn away all that dark evil which separates the creature from its first-created union with God. God's providence, from the fall to the restitution of all things, is doing the same thing as when he said to the dark chaos of fallen nature, " Let there be light." He still says, and will continue saying, the same thing, till there is no evil of darkness left in nature and creature. . . . That in God, which illuminates and glorifies saints and angels in heaven, is that very same working of the Divine Nature, which wounds, pains, punishes, and purifies sinners upon earth. And every number of destroyed sinners, whether thrown by Noah's flood or Sodom's brimstone into the terrible furnace of a life

[1] *A Collection of Letters*, London, 1760, p. 68 ; *Letters*, 1766, p. 175.

insensible of anything but new forms of misery until the judgement day, must through the all-working, all-redeeming love of God, which never ceases, come at last to know that they have lost and have found again such a God of love as this.[1]

There was doubtless in the eighteenth century still a good deal of fear that to proclaim openly the mercy of God would encourage the wicked to persist in their ways; and universalist views must have been more prevalent than appears from published statements. It is very significant, for instance, that a prominent divine like Bishop Thomas Newton (1704–82), who was also Dean of St. Paul's, should have written, without any sign that he was saying anything unusual and without exciting opposition, that " in the end all must be subdued, so that their punishment may more properly be called indefinite than infinite," and that " the devil himself must at last be subdued and submit." [2]

3. *Ethical and Metaphysical Developments*

Among scholars also there must have been much quiet reinterpretation of the notion of future punishment, for the sense of God's love was growing with the increase of civilised ideas; and, besides, the not unmerited gibes of Gibbon were making men think. The conversation between Dr. Johnson and the Master of Pembroke, which we mentioned at the beginning of this book, is significant of much. Dr. Johnson had begun by saying that he believed God to be infinitely

[1] W. Law, *Address to the Clergy*, London, 1761, pp. 171–3.
[2] *Works*, 1782, vol. iii, pp. 275, 230.

good, "so far as the perfection of his nature will allow"; but that "it is necessary, for good upon the whole, that individuals should be punished. As an *individual*, therefore, he is not infinitely good." Therefore Johnson said, as he could not be sure he had fulfilled the conditions, he was afraid he might be damned. Dr. Adams asked, "What do you mean by damned?" and when Johnson replied, "Sent to Hell, Sir, and punished everlastingly," Dr. Adams said, "I don't believe that doctrine." JOHNSON: "Hold, Sir, do you believe that some will be punished at all?" DR. ADAMS: "Being excluded from Heaven will be a punishment; yet there may be no great positive suffering." JOHNSON: "Well, Sir; but, if you admit any degree of punishment, there is an end of your argument for infinite goodness, simply considered; for infinite goodness would inflict no punishment whatever." [1]

An ethical change is evident here. It was brought out clearly by Schleiermacher (1768–1834) when he pointed out that the joy of heaven could not be complete while the knowledge existed of endless sufferings elsewhere. He and others drew attention to the spiritual immaturity of most men at death, to the disproportion between finite offences and infinite penalties, to the loss involved for the Creator until his whole family was restored, as well as to the defeat of the divine purpose if misery and antagonism were to continue for ever. Such considerations as these were permeating the more thoughtful minds. The strange thing is that they had not spread through Christendom before.

[1] J. Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*, cap. lv.

A metaphysical change, less obvious to us, had come about since Descartes (1596–1650) had made men realise the spiritual nature of the soul. Tertullian had believed that the soul was simply a second body. "Corporalitas animæ in ipso evangelio relucebit," he says, quaintly treating the story of Dives as a literal description of physiological fact; for are we not told of the tip of Lazarus' finger, and had not Dives a tongue?[1] Thus early was hell-fire connected with the physical nature of the soul; and the twin materialisms henceforth marched together and held one another up. The Fathers, as Cudworth pointed out during the age of Descartes, had taught that the soul was "nothing more than a most subtle body," with the exception of the Christian Platonists of Alexandria, who taught that it was a spirit, but always invested with a very thin and subtle body.[2] During the Middle Ages (when the Trinity could be represented as three men standing in a row), souls were everywhere depicted as bodies,—issuing from the mouths of the moribund, or climbing out of graves, gesticulating, being weighed in substantial scales, roasted and writhing over real fires. The revival of Platonism at the Renaissance led to more spiritual ideas; and men were prepared to follow Descartes when he proclaimed the principle that thought is the essence of the soul. The doctrine of a material hell became thenceforward untenable, exciting much contempt among critics of orthodoxy in the eighteenth century, till at last it was seen to be absurd. One is reminded of the curate at a mothers' meeting who waxed

[1] Tertullian, *De Anima*, 7.

[2] R. Cudworth, *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), Tegg, London, 1845, iii. p. 325.

eloquent about hell and the weeping and gnashing of teeth. An old woman called out, "Let them gnash 'em as 'as 'em." "What?" said the curate. The interrupter answered, "I ain't got none"; but the curate was ready, "Ah! my dear woman, they will be provided."

Hell-fire in fact went out with the notion of the soul as an inner body; and the wicked old legend suffered increasingly from the loss of its materiality. The time was bound to come when only untutored minds could feel confident about an idea with such curious implications; and as for the educated, 'fire,' if it were not literal, might mean anything—the fire of love, for instance, or of enthusiasm; and so the old certainty was whittled away.

But public statements, like that of Bishop Newton above, were exceptional; few preachers expressed any doubt about everlasting punishment; and the Methodist and Evangelical movements were a set-back to the development, partly because their vivid popular preaching relied much upon the fear of hell, and partly because they strengthened the uncritical and mechanical use of the Bible. It was not till the middle of the nineteenth century that the broad-church theologians began to move, openly and in a body, in another direction, with a strong backing from the world of literature, in the persons of Tennyson, Browning, the Brontës, Whittier, and others—not to mention those whom the crude theology of blood and fire had set against the Churches altogether.

Even then the development was not rapid. Archbishop Whatley was content to suggest the alternative of annihilation, or conditional immortality, as it is

called.[1] Milman, in his *History of Latin Christianity*,[2] 1855, gives a concise picture both of his own opinion and of the current orthodoxy when he says, " To the eternity of hell torments there is and ever must be—notwithstanding the peremptory decree of dogmatic theology, and the reverential dread in so many religious minds of tampering with what seems the language of the New Testament—a tacit repugnance." F. W. Robertson, one of the few preachers whose sermons survive to-day, went further, and said, in his sermon on John's Baptism,[3] in 1849, " Scripture language is symbolical. There is no salt, no worm, no fire, no torture " ; for in the hell and purgatory of Dante " we believe no longer " ; and he emphasised the terror, shame, and remorse of the soul, continued in the next life, as the real " wrath to come."

4. *F. D. Maurice*

Then in 1853 came one of those events which prove to be stages in the stream of thought, from which the flood never recedes. Frederick Denison Maurice was turned out of his professorship at King's College, London, for maintaining that Christ has excluded the ' notion of duration ' from the word ' eternal ' ; that the threescore and ten years of man's life do not limit the compassion of God ; and that " we want that clear, broad assertion of the Divine charity which the Bible makes, and which carries us immeasurably beyond all that we can ask or think."

Maurice's teaching is never easy to summarise.

[1] See J. Baldwin Brown, *The Doctrine of Annihilation*, London, 1875.
[2] Vol. ix, p. 91, in the 1864 ed.
[3] *Sermons*, 1861, vol. i, no. 8.

He taught that God's love is infinite, that to know this love is eternal life, that not to know it is death; that we do not know how long anyone may remain in eternal death, or whether all will be raised out of it; that we may not play with Scripture by quoting texts like "Where the tree falleth it shall lie," which have no connection with the subject; that we may not judge other men at all, or take upon ourselves the office of Divine Judge by inventing a scheme of purgatory; that we may not deny God's right of using punishment at any time or anywhere for the reformation of men, whether by few or many stripes, and that the greatest punishment of all is for God to say, "let them alone." Kingsley shared the views of his master. When Maurice was driven from his professorship at King's College (and he has left the legacy of his honour to all of us who have since taught in that place), Tennyson wrote, in 1854, the poem "To the Rev. F. D. Maurice":—

> For, being of that honest few,
> Who give the Fiend himself his due,
> Should eighty-thousand college-councils
> Thunder 'Anathema,' friend, at you;
>
> Should all our churchmen foam in spite
> At you, so careful of the right,
> Yet one lay-hearth would give you welcome
> (Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight,

with its cameo picture of the gospel that Maurice and Kingsley were founding for the next generation:—

> . . . Till you should turn to dearer matters,
> Dear to the man that is dear to God;
>
> How best to help the slender store,
> How mend the dwellings, of the poor;
> How gain in life, as life advances,
> Valour and charity more and more.

5. *H. B. Wilson and the Judicial Committee*

The subject of everlasting punishment did not however come up officially, after its exclusion from the Thirty-nine Articles, until 1862. The famous *Essays and Reviews* had appeared more than a year before ; and in this book was an essay by the Rev. H. B. Wilson, a former professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford, which ended by expressing the hope that " there shall be found, after the great adjudication, receptacles suitable for those who shall be infants, not as to years of terrestrial life, but as to spiritual development—nurseries, as it were, and seed grounds, where the undeveloped may grow up under new conditions, and the perverted be restored." [1]

Action was taken in the case of *Fendall* v. *Wilson*, and judgment was given against Mr. Wilson by Dr. Lushington in the Court of Arches in 1862. An appeal was then carried to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, which included the two Archbishops and the Bishop of London as well as the Lord Chancellor. In 1864 Dr. Lushington's decision was reversed and, in the current jest of the time, " Hell was dismissed with costs." The Judicial Committee, after referring to the withdrawal of the 42nd Article, said :—

We are not required, or at liberty, to express any opinion upon the mysterious question of the eternity of final punishment, further than to say that we do not find in the formularies . . . any such distinct declaration of our Church upon the subject as to

[1] *Essays and Reviews* appeared in 1860. In 1861 Bishop Colenso published his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, and concluded that St. Paul taught " that there is hope in the counsels of Infinite Wisdom and Love for all."

require us to condemn as penal the expression of a hope by a clergyman that even the ultimate pardon of the wicked, who are condemned in the Day of Judgement, may be consistent with the will of Almighty God.

It would seem that the rank and file still believed orthodoxy to be bound up with everlasting punishment; for no less than eleven thousand clergymen signed a Declaration against this judgment of the Judicial Committee. Dr. Pusey put himself at the head of a movement which was to unite both high and low churchmen against it: he preached a University sermon "in a tone of fierce denunciation" on eternal punishment; and he endeavoured to have the subject brought into the next General Election, in the form of a pledge to alter the methods of appeal. But people went on thinking. Preachers began to adopt a different tone; and books were written from different points of view on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1864, an American scholar, Alger, published a careful *Critical History*, which, especially in its fourth chapter on the "Doctrine of Future Punishment," condemned the traditional view; and this book went through many editions.[1] Emerson and the New England Transcendentalists had already, during a whole generation, been upsetting the old Calvinistic orthodoxy which had come down from the Pilgrim Fathers.

6. *The Final Stages*

Yet it was not the real orthodox hell that had been in dispute. That had, as Lecky pointed out in 1865,

[1] W. R. Alger, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future State*, Philadelphia, 1864.

been already completely abandoned in theological literature; and it was not seriously maintained by Maurice's opponents.

The hideous pictures of material fire and of endless torture which were once so carefully elaborated and so constantly enforced, have been replaced by a few vague sentences on the subject of 'perdition,' or by the general assertion of a future adjustment of the inequalities of life. . . . The eternity of punishment is, indeed, still strenuously defended by many; but the nature of that punishment, which had been one of the most prominent points in every previous discussion on the subject, has now completely disappeared from controversy.[1]

This great book of Lecky is itself an important landmark in the history of our subject, and it remains indispensable for those who base their arguments about religion on the past history of the Church. His thorough and judicial marshalling of the facts destroyed for ever among serious scholars the idealised view of history, which in different ways had been accepted both by the Tractarians and their opponents; it opened in fact a new era. Coming out when the controversy about the acquittal of Mr. Wilson was at its height, it made thoughtful men realise how stained the moral record had been, and greatly stimulated them in their determination to free the Christian Church from association with a hideous past. While he showed the great services which the Christian religion had rendered to humanity, and dwelt on the charity of the early Church and its gradual elimination

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *History of . . . Rationalism*, Longmans (1865), 18th ed., 1910, p. 335.

of slavery, he showed also the other and less familiar side; and of that particular Church which Dryden had pictured as a "milk-white hind, immortal and unchanged," he was able to say as the result of his investigations that it "has inflicted a greater amount of unmerited suffering than any other religion that has ever existed among mankind"; and to demonstrate that the atrocious treatment during most of the Christian era of pagans, heretics, Jews, and so-called witches, was the direct result of the doctrine of exclusive salvation and of its corollary, eternal punishment.

Thus while some whose minds had been long fixed continued to defend opinions because they were ancient, the number was increasing of those who felt rather the shame which the historical method was laying upon the Church, and were anxious to escape from the past. The new disposition became prominent in 1873, when the attempt, begun many years before by Dr. Arnold and others, to remove or alter the Athanasian Canticle, was revived with great vigour by Dean Stanley, Bishop Magee, Dr. Perowne, and other Churchmen, with the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Tait; but it was successfully held up by the more conservative element, Dr. Pusey and Dr. Liddon declaring publicly that if the 'creed' were 'mutilated or degraded' they would retire from the ministry of the Church of England,[1] a threat which the Archbishop stigmatised as 'unreasonable conduct,' but which none the less deferred action being taken in the matter till 1927.

[1] F. Warre Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, Macmillan, 1910, Part II, p. 163.

Neither the doctrine of exclusive salvation however nor that of everlasting punishment could any longer be kept in the background and quietly acquiesced in. Already, in 1867, Andrew Jukes had published his strong plea for universalism already referred to, *The Second Death and the Restitution of All Things*, which went through several editions. Dr. Plumptre, who had been chaplain of King's College at the time when Maurice was compelled to resign, and was now a member of the Old Testament revision committee, wrote a series of sermons between 1871 and 1884, which were published in the latter year as *The Spirits in Prison and Other Studies on the Life after Death.* There were other books, including a 'Universalist Library' by the Unitarian Dr. J. H. Thom; and the doctrine of everlasting punishment was whittled down or quietly abandoned by one theologian after another. John Stuart Mill was justified in saying, "The time, I believe, is drawing near when this dreadful conception of an object of worship will be no longer identified with Christianity." [1]

The position about this time is fairly described by a temperate and able advocate of the 'larger hope,' the eminent Baptist divine, Dr. Samuel Cox, who was editor of the *Expositor* when he wrote in 1877:—

Few of the more thoughtful and cultivated preachers of the Gospel now hold the dogma of everlasting torment; in a large circle of acquaintance I hardly know one; and yet how few seek to replace it, in the mind of the Church, with any doctrine which they

[1] J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, 1873, p. 41.

hold to be more in accordance with 'the mind of the Spirit.'[1]

A little later, at the end of 1877, Dr. Farrar created an immense popular interest by preaching five sermons on "Eternal Hope" in Westminster Abbey: these were printed in February, 1878, and reprinted seven times in that year; by 1904 a twentieth impression was reached and the book was issued at sixpence. Dr. Pusey published an answer to this challenge in *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment?* (1880): Farrar replied in a larger book, *Mercy and Judgment*, 1881. He always disclaimed being a universalist, and contented himself with saying that there is room for repentance beyond the grave, and in general with a 'larger hope,' based upon the belief that God is love and that there is a forgiveness of sins. New Testament criticism was then in its infancy; and the position, which was developed by correspondence, became somewhat grotesque: Pusey demanded that *some* souls should be everlastingly damned, because he held that Scripture and the Fathers required this belief; Farrar admitted the possibility of endless punishment for some, though not as an article of faith.[2] Pusey was prepared to allow as a tenable opinion that the majority of mankind might after long punishment ultimately be saved; Newman also, in a letter to Plumptre, was prepared to remove "from so awful a doom vast multitudes," but, "what we cannot accept is . . . that man's probation for his eternal destiny, as well as his purification, continue

[1] S. Cox, *Salvator Mundi* (1877), 13th ed., Kegan Paul, 1889, p. xix.

[2] *Mercy and Judgment*, pp. 176–8.

after this life." [1] This was of course a gulf which no ingenuity could bridge; Farrar did not go any farther in his attempts to agree with Pusey; but there have been preachers who went on developing the attempted compromise into a bargain, and suggested that both views might be reconciled on the basis of a restricted number of victims, say a few thousand only; or indeed that honour might be satisfied by the damnation of only one unfortunate wretch—so that it would be still possible to say, 'There is a hell'—as if the ethical or philosophical difficulties could be removed by a little arithmetic.

But some on the high-church side were breaking away from Pusey. In the year of the publication of *Eternal Hope*, Dr. Littledale wrote in the *Contemporary Review*, concerning everlasting torment, "This view puts God on a moral level with the devisers of the most savagely malignant revenge known in history"; and in 1888, Alfred Gurney, the Vicar of St. Barnabas, Pimlico, writing from the same side, produced a little book, *Our Catholic Inheritance in the Larger Hope*. With the publication of *Lux Mundi* in 1889, the theology of Pusey, on this as on some other subjects, was dropped, and that of Maurice substituted; nor has any serious theologian reverted since to the old vengeance.

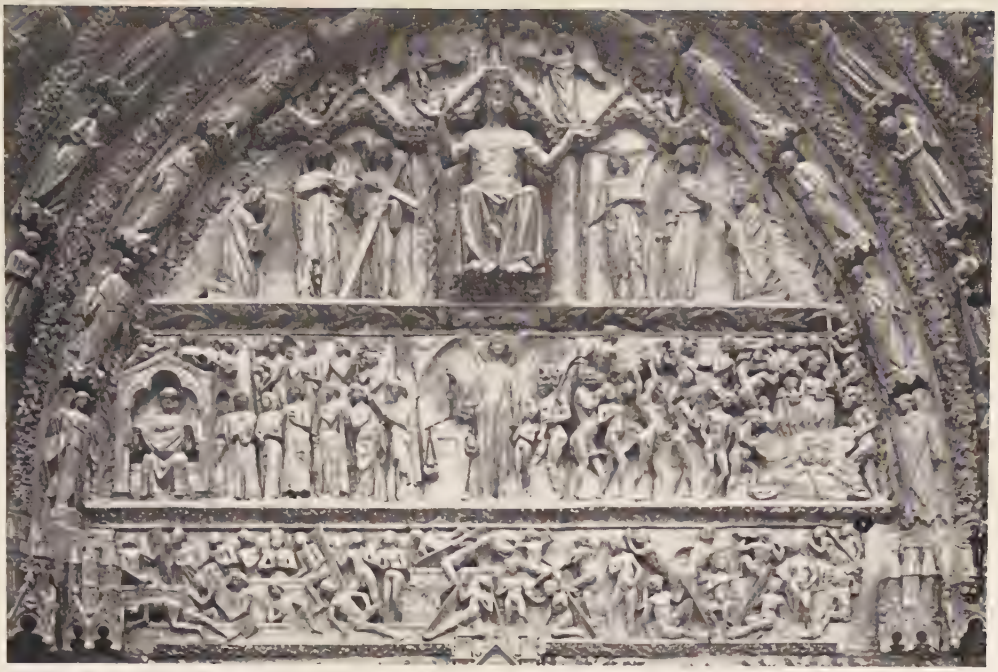
In the present century the change has been completely recognised, though there is still an aftermath and abundant survivals in popular thought. The position of thinkers to-day has been well expressed by many theologians and philosophers. Perhaps the following example will suffice:—

I should like to begin by stating quite definitely that

[1] *Mercy and Judgment*, pp. 19–20.

the doctrine of everlasting punishment—in its ordinary, traditional acceptation—presents us with a view of the character of God so clearly revolting to the modern conscience, and so inconsistent with the general teaching of our Lord himself about the Love of God, that we could not accept it in deference to any external authority whatever.[1]

[1] H. Rashdall, *Conscience and Christ*, Duckworth, 1916, p. 294.



VII.—The Last Judgment
(*Bourges Cathedral*)

CHAPTER III

CURRENT SOURCES OF THE IDEA OF HELL

I. Introduction: Stages in New Testament Criticism

WE have seen how damnation was brought into Christianity, so that the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven became a Bad News of the Kingdom of Hell. The minds of men, shrinking from the idea of God's unclouded love, have developed the doctrine of perdition from certain sources. But, before we proceed to the consideration of these sources, it may be well for the sake of the general reader to say a few words about the scientific study of the New Testament.

New Testament study has advanced in four main stages :—

(1) The dissemination of the Greek texts, which began in the latter part of the fifteenth century and enabled men to check the Latin of the Vulgate by the original version. It may be worth while to give an instance of this. When Erasmus published his edition of the Greek Testament, it became clear (to Luther among others) that the word *metanoein*, which in our Bibles is rendered by 'repent,' had been mistranslated by Jerome in the Vulgate when he rendered it *facere pœnitentiam*, 'to do penance'; they saw that this distortion had deeply stained the whole medieval theology, with abundant effects upon the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences. Our word 'repent' must have

seemed a revolutionary change at the time ; but, great as was the release it brought, it has not shaken off all its Latin colour, and does not convey the exact meaning of the Greek. *Metanoein* means 'to think again.' What a difference ! Not to do penance, but to change one's mind. A new power, spiritual and constructive, has come into the word, and the last trace of vindictiveness has disappeared. "Joy in heaven" indeed "over one sinner who thinks again" ! So the Greek says not that our Lord preached the Gospel and told people to repent, but rather that he 'heralded the Good News,' and said, "The Reign of God is at hand ; think again—change your minds—and believe in the Good News." And, age after age, the world has been made better by those who turn from their 'sins, negligencies, and ignorances,' to think again.

(2) The second stage in New Testament criticism came from the discovery of fresh manuscripts, and the consequent development of a better Greek text, in the nineteenth century. To this, more than to anything else, our Revised Version owes its superior accuracy. An example of the result is the disappearance of "he that believeth not shall be damned," which is mentioned on page 155.

(3) The next stage has been the unravelling of the Synoptic problem, mainly through the identification of the two common sources of Matthew and Luke, as we shall explain on pages 149-52.

(4) The last stage has been the discovery of a whole literature of Jewish Apocalyptic, and the consequent completion of the bridge between the Old Testament and the New. The New Testament now stands out against a different background.

It may be convenient for the reader if we take the sources of the traditional ideas about hell in the following order: (1) The mistranslation of certain words in the Authorised Version of the Bible, which was due to the fact that the divines of 1611 were strictly charged to "retain the old ecclesiastical words," and to employ them in the sense in which they had been commonly used by the doctors of the Church in former times—and was due also to the prevalent ideas of the divines themselves. (2) The additions and other changes made in the words of Christ by later compilers, editors, and copyists, especially in the Gospel which bears the name of Matthew. (3) The interpolation of the 'Little Apocalypse' among the discourses of Jesus. We will then in Chapter IV proceed to the consideration of the influence of Jewish Apocalyptic upon those who produced the Synoptic records.

Let us then deal first with the mistranslations.

II. Mistranslations

1. *Damnation*

Neither 'damnation' nor 'hell' is represented in the original Greek of the New Testament, nor for that matter in the Hebrew of the Old Testament either. 'Damn' and its derivatives have disappeared from the Revised Version.

In the Authorised Version however the word 'damn,' in one form or other, was arbitrarily used on eight important occasions to translate the Greek *krinein* and its derivatives, where 'judge' would be the correct translation; and twice for *katakrinein*, which means 'to condemn.' *Krinein* is rendered

correctly more than 150 times by 'judge,' seven times incorrectly by 'condemn,' and twice by 'accuse'; but thirteen times its meaning is changed to 'damn' or 'damnation.' *Katakrinein* is rendered correctly twenty-two times by 'condemn,' and twice by 'damn.' There was no justification for this; for 'damn' had already acquired its peculiar meaning.

Thus, when Jesus was accusing the Scribes of devouring widows' houses (Mk. 12 : 40; Mt. 23 : 14; Lk. 20 : 47), he did not say, "These shall receive greater damnation," but "These shall receive severer judgement." And, in another denunciation peculiar to Matthew and less well authenticated (23 : 33), he did not say, "Ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell," but, according to this account, "how shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna." No doubt the divines wished to terrify people into doing good by rendering the passage in St. John (5 : 29), "and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation"; but the passage is in reality mild enough: it does not say "the resurrection of perdition," or of "hell," or of "endless torment," but simply "they that have done ill, to the resurrection of judgement." The whole sentence however seems to be the interpolation of an editor or copyist.[1]

The word *krisis* thus mistranslated 'damnation,' does not as a matter of fact occur often in the Gospels:

[1] H. H. Wendt (*Die Lehre Jesu*, Göttingen, 1886–90, i, pp. 249–51) gives the reasons for the rejection of these verses 28 and 29. They are at variance, not only with the rest of the Fourth Gospel, but also with the immediate context; and their excision restores unity to the passage. He also points out other interpolations from the same hand, for which see pp. 160-1, below.

it never means what is now meant by damnation; and sometimes in the Bible, following the Hebrew use, it bears the good sense of 'justice' or even of 'religion,' as in "He shall declare judgement to the Gentiles," quoted in Matthew (12 : 18) from Isaiah, or in the statement in St. Luke (11 : 42) that the Pharisees passed over judgement and the love of God.

It is to this monstrous and deliberate mistranslation, more than to anything else, that the popular ideas (which were once the general orthodoxy) are based.

2. *Hell*

The word 'hell' is used in the Authorised Version for two very different words in the Greek, *hades*, which occurs twelve times, and *Geenna*, as well as once for *Tartarus* in the doubtful Second Epistle of Peter.

Originally 'hell,' which comes from an old word signifying 'to cover up or hide,' had an innocent signification. The Oxford Dictionary gives instances of this primary use, from King Alfred to Caxton, and of the consequent meaning of the 'hidden world,' the place of departed spirits or hades, from Anglo-Saxon times to Wyclif, Chaucer, Pope, and Shelley. By the time of the Authorised Version another meaning, that of a place of torment, had grown upon the word. But the old sense of something covered or hidden still persisted: the 'hell' was the arbour in games of the kiss-in-the-ring type; a tailor's hell, in Swift's *Tale of a Tub* and elsewhere, is the receptacle for shreds under his shop-board: 'to hele' is still to-day a dialect word for covering roots or seeds; 'heled' means covered with tiles or lead, as in Piers

Plowman (1393)—"All the houses be heled. . . . With no lead but with love"; and the Dictionary quotes an advertisement from the *West Sussex County Times* of 'slate-healed' cottages as late as 1894; a 'hellier' is still in the West Country a slater or tiler, and the familiar name Hilliard comes from this trade.

At the time when the English Prayer Book was issued, 'hell' still bore so much the meaning of the underworld or place of the departed that it was, as it still is, used in the Creed—"He descended into hell." It often has this meaning in the Authorised Version of the Bible of a neutral place of departed spirits or hades; and the Hebrew equivalent, *sheol*, is there rendered thirty-two times by 'hell,' thirty-one by 'the grave,' and three times by 'the pit.'

(A) HADES occurs three times in the Gospels, and nine times in the New Testament altogether.[1] It never means the final condition of men; and the standard ancient writers, Greek, Roman, and Jewish, speak of their noblest men as dwelling in hades. In the New Testament hades means the unseen world whether for good or bad; and sometimes it has the same meaning as 'the grave' in the Old Testament, as when our Lord said, "And thou, Capernaum . . . shalt go down unto hades" (Mt. 11 : 23), that is, to the desolation of death. In the Apocalypse it always has this connotation of death—certainly not that of what hell now means—as when the writer breaks out into hope with the words, "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20 : 14).

[1] The student may like to have all the references:—Mt. 11 : 23; 16 : 18; Lk. 16 : 23; Acts 2 : 27, 31; Rev. 1 : 18; 6 : 8; 20 : 13, 14.

(B) GEHENNA. In the Revised Version *hades* or *haides* is represented by 'hades'; but *Geenna* is still translated 'hell,' which is unfortunate, since Gehenna does not mean everlasting punishment, as hell in ordinary speech does.

The word Gehenna is rare in the New Testament: it occurs indeed twelve times; but seven of these are in the Gospel that is called by the name of St. Matthew, and the compiler or editor is only supported on one occasion (the 'Offences' passage) by St. Mark, and once by St. Luke. The 'Offences' passage is that about plucking out the eye and cutting off the hand; and six of the instances refer to this one occasion, repeated twice by Matthew, very characteristically, in his fifth and eighteenth chapters. There are at most only four *occasions* in the Gospels when the word was used, and probably fewer. The details of the first three are given on pages 228, 232; but the student may like to have the complete list of the use of the word Gehenna here:—*Occasion* 1: Mt. 5: 22; *Occasion* 2 (the "Offences" passage): Mt. 5: 29, 30; 18: 9; Mk. 9: 43, 45, 47; *Occasion* 3: Mt. 10: 28; Lk. 12: 5. *Occasion* 4 is in the Matthæan version of the denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees: Jesus says (23: 15) that they compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and make him twofold more a son of Gehenna than themselves—a fact that can be verified in the world of proselytism at the present day. He also says (23: 33, but the verse is probably an editorial addition), "how shall ye escape the judgement of Gehenna?" The only other instance of the word Gehenna is in the Epistle of James (3: 6), where the writer says very appro-

priately that the tongue is a fire which is set alight by Gehenna.

This word, so rare in the New Testament, which is not put in the mouth of Jesus at all by St. John, and only on one occasion by St. Mark and once by St. Luke, has been the cause of much discussion. There was a valley near Jerusalem called Ge Hinnōm, the Valley of Hinnōm, where, it is said, the refuse of the city was burnt ; and its name was used as a metaphor by the Jews in later times for the place of future punishment of the wicked. Rabbis differed as to its finality, and instances were collected half a century ago of some who limited its operation to short periods of time.[1] Many modern Jewish writers have indignantly denied that there is any support in their ancient writings, including the Old Testament, the Mishna and the Talmud, for what one of them has called "the modern Christian doctrine of everlasting woe."[2] So far, so good ; but whatever precise meaning the word Gehenna may have borne to those who listened to Jesus, it would be a mistake to credit him with any theories which either the common people or the Pharisees had fastened upon it. He used, once at least, a popular word which his hearers would understand in their own way, and which conveyed the meaning he required of a terrible danger to be avoided. He used figurative language, as anyone might at the present day ; and he quite certainly did not mean that the penalty for calling a man 'thou

[1] E.g., Dr. A. Dewes, *A Plea for a New Translation of the Scriptures*, London, 1866.

[2] See Rabbi Marks in Farrar, *Eternal Hope*, Macmillan, 1904 ed., pp. 31–2, 82–5 ; and in *Mercy and Judgment*, Macmillan, 1894 ed., cap. viii.

fool' was endless torment in hell. It would be indeed difficult to avoid applying that epithet to anyone who thought he did.

3. *'Eternal' and 'Everlasting'*

These two words are used arbitrarily and indiscriminately in the Authorised Version to translate the Greek word *aiōnios*, which means neither eternal nor everlasting. The latter word denotes quantity, and signifies that which lasts for ever; whereas 'eternal' denotes quality, and signifies that which is spiritual and divine, and above time altogether. *Aiōnios* on the other hand means 'age-long,' lasting for an epoch, or 'enduring'; and is most safely rendered by the equivalent "æonian." It comes from the noun *aiōn*, "æon," which means the age now in being, and thus sometimes the "world": "Charge them that are rich in this present *æon*" (1 Tim. 6 : 17), where it is translated "world"; as also in "Demas forsook me, having loved this present *æon*" (2 Tim. 4 : 10). In the Septuagint Greek of the Old Testament, as in Homer and Herodotus, it sometimes means the lifetime of a man, or of a nation, or an epoch in a nation's history, or the world's existence. In the New Testament, the thought of a series of æons is predominant—the ages that are past, when the mystery was hidden, as St. Paul says (Eph. 3 : 9), the present age, and the age which is to come (e.g. Eph. 1 : 21, when they are mentioned together). The age to come was not for St. Paul what we should mean by the "end of the world," but the new dispensation when Christ would reign on the earth.

Thus "æonian" means "lasting for the age,"

age-long; or, lasting for a lifetime; or for a long time, as when Josephus [1] speaks of a man being imprisoned "with æonian bonds"—he was in fact 'doing time.' The word generally means that which lasts for a very long time, and may often be rendered by "enduring": thus—The enduring possession, enduring foundations of ruined cities; or the enduring life or punishment, the enduring might, salvation, or gospel. We should not like to see the fine-sounding word "everlasting" replaced when it is a manifest hyperbole, as when the gates of Zion are apostrophised, "lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates," or the mountains are spoken of as "the everlasting hills"; but indeed age-long harm has been done by its use, and by that of "eternal," when they are definitely misleading.[2]

The phrases "eternal damnation," "eternal death," and "eternal perdition," do not occur at all in the Bible; but if they did, they would mean nothing more than age-long or enduring condemnation or death, since neither "eternal" nor "everlasting" has an equivalent in the original. But there is a Greek word in the New Testament which does mean everlasting—*aïdios*: this occurs only twice, otherwise *aiōnios* is the word translated as "eternal" and "everlasting"; and oddly enough *aïdios*, when it does occur, is rendered in the Authorised Version by "his *eternal* power and Godhead," in the epistle to the Romans (1: 20), and once, in the doubtful

[1] *Jewish War*, vi, cap. 9, § 4.

[2] The references to the above instances are Gen. 17: 8; Is. 58: 12 (translated "of many generations"); Mt. 25: 46; 1 Tim. 6: 16; Heb. 5: 9; Rev. 14: 6; Ps. 24: 7; Gen. 49: 26. *Aiōnios* occurs 439 times in the Septuagint, generally of things like the Passover sprinkling (Ex. 12: 24) or the smoke of Edom (Is. 35: 9–10), which have long since passed away.

epistle of Jude (6) by "*everlasting chains.*" How loosely such words could be used is shown in the latter instance by the statement that the fallen angels are only kept in 'everlasting' chains unto the judgement of the great day.

The reader might imagine that there is no Greek word to express the idea of endlessness, and that therefore *aiōnios* had to be used. This is not the case. There are many Greek words for "endless" or "everlasting" besides *aïdios*: such as *ateleutetos*, *aperantos* (which occurs in the "endless genealogies" of 1 Tim. 1 : 4), *adialeiptos*, or the adverbs *aei*, *pantote*, or the *zōē akatalutou* ("the power of an endless life") of Heb. 7 : 16. It would have been easy and decisive for a New Testament writer to say that future punishment would last *eis aei*, "for ever," or *aneu telous*, "without end," or *eis to diēnekes*, "to perpetuity," and this last phrase is used twice (Heb. 10 : 12 and 14), but only of the salvation of Christ.

Though there is no mention of eternal or aeonian death in the Bible, there are ways of expressing the idea of eternal life. Such a life is "the life of God" (Eph. 4 : 18), "the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6 : 19), "the æonian life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 Jn. 1 : 2). Indeed, in late Jewish history, the phrase "æonian life" grew up as a technical expression to convey the meaning which we now give to the word "eternal." It occurs first in the late Book of Daniel; and it abounds in nearly every part of the New Testament: twenty-three of the forty-three times when it appears are in the writings of St. John. With him indeed this phrase "the enduring Life" (as we may perhaps best

render "æonian" in this connection) is constantly pressed upon his hearers to make them realise the new life as something already present—for example, in the saying that he who believes has eternal life, and has passed out of death unto life (5 : 24 ; cf. 6 : 47 ; 20 : 31, etc.). Thus, as F. D. Maurice and Westcott pointed out, with lasting results upon subsequent thought, the enduring life is the life which is perfect and permanent, which has in fact nothing to do with time, but is beyond time altogether. The thought of St. John is that the life with God is the really enduring life—as indeed he says in so many words, "This is the enduring life, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (17 : 3). Thus in this phrase, "the æonian life," the word came to have the special meaning which is the true meaning of the word "eternal"; and to transcend time; but otherwise "æonian" keeps its usual time-meaning of enduring or age-long. The phrase "æonian death" (or eternal or everlasting death) does not occur at all in the Bible.

Jesus did indeed himself once express the thought of endlessness; but it was in describing forgiveness. Peter asked him how often he ought to forgive his brother—till seven times? Not till seven times, was the answer, but till seventy times seven (Mt. 18 : 22), an unlimited number of times in fact. And he taught that man ought to forgive as God forgives: he bid us pray that God may forgive us as we have already forgiven those who trespass against us, endlessly. Again and again does our Lord insist on the need of unlimited human forgiveness, and points to it as that which makes men likest God.

"Age-long" then means that which lasts for the necessary period of time; and the word, when it is applied to the life in God, comes to mean also spiritual or divine, that which is perfect and unconnected with time—but only when applied to the life in God. What it was made to mean by multitudes of preachers in later ages, let me show by a modern example, published with official sanction in the enlightened nineteenth century, which explains it for the benefit of little children :—

Little child, if you go to Hell there will be a devil at your side to strike you. He will go on striking you every minute for ever and ever without stopping. The first stroke will make your body as bad as the body of Job. . . . The fourth stroke will make your body four times as bad as the body of Job. How then will your body be after the devil has been striking it every moment for a hundred million of years without stopping? Perhaps at this moment, seven o'clock in the evening, a child is just going to Hell. To-morrow evening, at seven o'clock, go and knock at the gates of Hell and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. They will come back again and say, *the child is burning.* Go in a week and ask what the child is doing; you will get the same answer, *it is burning.* Go in a year and ask, the same answer comes—*it is burning.* Go in a million years and ask the same question, the answer is just the same—*it is burning.* So, if you go for ever and ever, you will always get the same answer—*it is burning in the fire.*[1]

[1] J. Furniss, C.SS.R., *Books for Children,* Book X. *The Sight of Hell,* Dublin, Duffy, *c.* 1850. Milder torments are still taught to unsuspecting children : *e.g.,* in a tract of which over 100,000 had been sold in 1927, published by the Society of St. Peter and St. Paul, and called, with unconscious irony, *Joy in Heaven,* the pain is so far reduced that the child is told to compare it with an exaggerated and never-ending toothache.

The frenzied character of such attempts to describe the impossible are due to the fact that, as soon as one tries to contemplate the doctrine of everlasting punishment as if it were really true, it becomes unthinkable. To us such rant may appear merely idiotic ; but it falls short of the supposed reality. In some quarters these things are still being said, sometimes in order to 'convert' the uneducated, sometimes to terrify simple-minded people and children into the confessional ; and in the last century they represented so truly the common doctrine as to call forth the following noble protest from one of the holiest of the champions of God's love, and of his justice, Andrew Jukes, whom I quote, putting in italic the passages specially relevant to this matter of endlessness :—

When I think too of God's justice, which it is said inflicts *not only millions of years of pain for each thought or word or act* of sin during this short life of seventy years—*not even millions of ages* only for every such act, but a punishment which *when millions of ages of judgement have been inflicted* for every moment man has lived on earth *is no nearer its end than when it first commenced ;* and all this for twenty, forty, or seventy years of sin in a world which is itself a vale of sorrow : when I think of this, and then of man, his nature, his weakness, all the circumstances of his brief sojourn and trial in this world ; with temptations without, and a foolish heart within ; with his judgement weak, his passions strong, his conscience judging, not helping him ; with a tempter always near, with this world to hide a better—when I remember that this creature, though fallen, was once God's child, and that God is not just only, but loving and long-suffering ; I cannot say my reason would conclude, that this creature, failing to

avail itself of the mercy here offered by a Saviour, shall therefore find no mercy any more, but be for ever punished with never-ending torments.[1]

4. *'Punishment' and 'Torment'*

The Greek word *kolasis* occurs only twice in the New Testament. On one occasion (1 Jn. 4 : 18) it is translated 'torment,' "Perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." On the other (Mt. 25 : 46)—the chief text of the old damnation school—it is translated 'punishment,' "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment."[2] We need not press the niceties of classical Greek in dealing with the Hellenistic form of the language; but *kolasis* is certainly a word which is adequately rendered by 'correction,'[3] the word which properly means the punishment of vengeance or retribution being *timōria*, which is used only by the writer of Hebrews, and once (10 : 29), "Of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God." Writers of that age could therefore express the idea of retributive punishment when they wanted to : indeed Josephus gives the exact idea of the hell-mongers when he speaks of *athanatos timōria*, "undying punishment." It is the more significant that even in the strongest of Matthew's sentences, his words mean no more than "These shall go away into enduring correction."

The word translated 'torment' in the parable of

[1] Andrew Jukes, *The Second Death*, London, 3rd ed., 1873, p. 114.

[2] The words are not held by scholars to have been spoken by Jesus. See p. 233.

[3] *Kolazō*, literally 'to prune.' *Kolasis* in Liddell and Scott's Dictionary is "a pruning: a checking, punishing, correction, chastening."

Dives (Lk. 16 : 23, 28) is a different one, *basanos*, which means trial, pain, torment, or disease. It is used in Mt. 4 : 24, " divers diseases and *pains* " ; as a verb in Mt. 8 : 6, " sick of the palsy, grievously *distressed* " ; in Mt. 14 : 24, " the ship was *distressed* by the waves " [A.V. " *tossed* "] ; in Mk. 6 : 48, " *distressed* in rowing " [A.V. " *toiling* "] ; of the demoniac at Gerasa, e.g. Mk. 5 : 7, " I adjure thee by God, *torment* me not " ; and frequently in the Apocalypse.

5. " *Perdition* "

This word also is a mistranslation. The Greek word *apōleia* means a state of failure or ruin, not necessarily irremediable, and is also used of physical death. It never means what it now implies in common speech—damnation ; indeed it may even have so light a meaning as that in Mark 14 : 4, " To what purpose hath this *waste* of the ointment been made ? " though it often has a stronger meaning as when John calls Judas " the son of perdition." In its verbal form the word generally means that which is lost but recoverable. It is indeed the word used for the *lost* sheep, the *lost* piece of silver, and the *lost* son. Many who pointed to the text, " Fear him which is able to *destroy* (*apolesai*) both soul and body in Gehenna," forgot that the word occurs again in the same chapter as " lose "—" He that findeth his life shall *lose* (*apolesai*) it ; and he that loseth (*apolesas*) his life for my sake shall find it." This word which has come to mean eternal damnation also occurs in the great liberating saying, " The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." [1]

[1] The references are :—Mt. 10 : 6 ; Lk. 15 : 6, 9, 24 ; Mt. 10 : 28 and 39 ; Lk. 19 : 10. For Dives and Lazarus, see pp. 235-8.

The idea of perdition, either as damnation or as annihilation, is in fact one for which the New Testament is not responsible.

6. *The 'End of the World'*

Our Lord must often have spoken of judgment to his disciples, of the divine discrimination between good and evil, of the repudiation of those who claim the reward and shirk the service, of the love which surges like a fire against the evil that wrecks the world, 'salting' it as with purifying fire, of the ultimate establishment of justice which in this life seems to be so unequally distributed. But the picture which our fathers made of this purging and liberating triumph of justice was that of Matthew and of the author of the Little Apocalypse; and it can hardly be doubted that the phrases of these two Hebrew writers are their own interpretation in the language of their environment of the Master's teaching. For the phrases are peculiar to them, and are not found elsewhere in the Gospels. Let us here take the case of the editorship we know under the name of Matthew.

The phrase the 'End of the World' is not indeed even that of Matthew, but of a later theology incorporated in our Authorised Version. The Greek (*sunteleia tou aiōnos*) is rightly rendered by Jerome in the Latin "*consummatio sæculi*"; but even the Revised Version is content with the old mistranslation, and only puts in the margin the warning that the Greek really means "the consummation of the age."

The "consummation of the age" is a very different idea from the "end of the world"; and it is important and true, if we remember that the consummation of

one age is the birth of the next : " a woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world."

But the phrase is a peculiarity of Matthew, who uses it five times.[1] The three instances in the thirteenth chapter must be editorial, as we have noted on pages 239–40 ; and that in the twenty-sixth also can hardly be otherwise. In the other instance we have the source from which the whole passage is taken ; and here it is plain that Matthew is rendering the original in language of his own. Let us put the different versions side by side, placing the original in the left-hand column :—

Mark 13 : 4	*Matt.* 24 : 3, *rightly translated*	*Matt.* 24 : 3, *A.V.*
Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign when these things are all about to be accomplished ?	Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, *and of the consummation of the age ?*	Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of *the end of the world ?*

In this case, when we can check the process, we find that, so far from the end of the world being in question, it was only the destruction of the Temple that the disciples were enquiring about when they asked, " When shall these things be accomplished ? " Matthew rendered this by interpreting it as a sign of Christ's coming and the consummation of the age. The Authorised Version went farther, and made it the end of the world.

[1] Mt. 13 : 39, 40, 49 ; 24 : 3 ; 28 : 20. It occurs also in Heb. 9 : 26, but there it refers to the Crucifixion.

III. Additions and Changes

There are however in the three Synoptists, and especially in Matthew, passages which, however accurately they are translated, are inconsistent with the teaching of Christ—though such passages are conspicuously absent from the Fourth Gospel. Now if both these elements are authentic, then the conclusion must be that Jesus discovered a great truth, the greatest truth in the world, but had not sufficient consistency of mind to separate from it the ideas in which he had been brought up ; and he sinks at once to the rank of those second-rate men who fail to realise the full significance of the thoughts that are struggling in their minds. But it is more likely that this inconsistency should appear in his followers : indeed we are told in the Gospels that it did, and that even his chosen Apostles failed to understand him and thought of themselves as the vice-gerents in a kingdom that was shortly to be established upon the earth when the Roman domination had been swept away. Still more influenced by such ideas would be an intensely Jewish Christian like the author of the Gospel which is known by the name of St. Matthew ; and it is in the editorial comments and additions of this book that the inconsistent passages are mainly found.

Our fathers had to fit these inconsistencies together by hook or by crook as best they could, because they had inherited a mechanical theory of the Bible ; and the patching up of ' discrepancies ' was one of the most general occupations of theology. The task was always a hopeless one, because the Synoptic problem had not been unravelled ; and for a still more important reason

—the belief that the whole Bible was an oracle, virtually dictated by the Almighty to writers inspired to the degree of inerrancy.

Until the third quarter indeed of the nineteenth century, scholarly people could still prefix the words " God said " before a quotation from any passage in any part of the Bible. We know now that this was an error due to a misunderstanding of the meaning of revelation ; but many have not even yet realised that the reports of sayings of Jesus himself are not all equally close to the original, since they are varied, generally to a slight extent only, by different evangelists. The author of Matthew, for instance, did not regard Mark as verbally infallible, but considered himself free to adapt his words for his own purpose. To take one striking instance : The rich young man in Mark (10 : 17) called Jesus good, and Jesus replied (surely with a smile), " Why callest thou me good ? none is good save one, even God." The author of Matthew thought that false inferences might be drawn from this, and changed it to the rather obscure remark, " Why askest thou me concerning that which is good ? " (19 : 17). Luke, on the other hand, kept to the original saying as related in Mark. In another case, that of Sabbath observance, both Matthew and Luke think it wiser to omit the drastic saying, " The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath " ; and Matthew adds two apposite Old Testament quotations to the words of Jesus as recorded by St. Mark. A study of the three versions in Mark 2, Matthew 12, and Luke 6, will make this very clear. Our ancestors used to worry a great deal over such discrepancies ; but the clue has now been put in our hands.

1. *The Synoptic Problem and its Solution*

Most of us have probably regretted that so much precious space should be taken up in the New Testament by repetitions of the same matter. But this has now had the valuable result of enabling a scientific age to arrive at a much closer idea of the actual teaching of Jesus Christ. This we should never have been able to do, if we had not had the opportunity of comparing the different records.

The clue was so long in finding because of a not unnatural mistake of the patristic writers. They thought that Matthew was the original Gospel, and that the 'curt hand' (as Hippolytus put it) of St. Mark had merely abbreviated the fuller record. This was the exact opposite of the truth; but the mistake was fixed upon the Church till modern times by the dominant authority of Augustine—whose genius did so much harm to the Christian religion in many ways; for Augustine laid it down that Mark was only the "abbreviator and lackey [*pedesequus*] of Matthew." But it is certain that Mark is the more primitive record, and that both 'Matthew' and Luke drew much of their material from that Gospel, making alterations and adding comments as they thought fit.

These preliminary words about what is called the Synoptic problem may be of use; for experience shows that many otherwise well-read people are unacquainted with it. Briefly both 'Matthew' and Luke transcribed the larger part of their matter from two sources—the Gospel of Mark, which we still possess, and a lost collection of the discourses of Jesus, which (in order not to beg any questions) scholars call by the symbol "Q."

'Matthew' and Luke had also sources of their own—"M" and "L"; but that we can leave aside for the moment.[1]

Now by comparing a passage in St. Mark with the same passage as it is written out by 'Matthew' and by St. Luke, the ordinary reader can see for himself how much or how little these two have modified their original. We shall consider several instances of this —as, for instance on pages 244–8—which illustrate how 'Matthew,' having a special didactic aim in a time of great urgency, adapted his material more than Luke, to suit the needs as he understood them of his audience: and we must remember that he wrote for them, and not for us. Classical historians were not allowed by the conventions of their age to copy their sources verbatim, without recasting the material, and in particular were obliged to compose afresh the speeches of historical characters, setting down the sentiments which seemed proper to the occasion, as Thucydides explains in a famous passage. Thus Livy follows Polybius for his facts, but composes the speeches afresh.[2] But luckily for us, the Jews had a habit of carefully memorising the aphorisms of their great teachers; and this is why the sayings of Jesus have come down to us in the Synoptic Gospels with a freshness and individuality that are unmistakable. None the less we must remember that all ancient writers claimed a freedom of method which the modern conception of history as a strict science has now caused us to abandon.

Such freedom was indeed inevitable under ancient

[1] See pp. 152, 154.

[2] See H. J. Cadbury, on the Greek and Jewish traditions of writing history in F. J. F. Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Macmillan, 1922, ii, pp. 11–14.

conditions of penmanship. An author did not sit at a table with his books spread out before him. He sat with a board across which was spread a strip of papyrus which might be part of a roll twenty feet long. His sources were other rolls in a box at his side. Thus when 'Matthew' was transcribing Q, he would have to take the roll of papyrus out of the box, hold it open with both hands, read the sentence he was copying, put the roll back, and then write out from memory, slowly enough, with incessant dipping of his reed in the ink. Then he would take up again the roll which we call Q, study another sentence, put the roll back, and write as before. Even with a mere scribe this cumbrous method led to innumerable small variations; but an author did not regard himself as a scribe but as one who was moulding his material into a new work. He would therefore be more likely to trust to his memory rather than keep referring again and again to a roll ten or more feet long. When therefore we speak of an author with the literary power and highly marked individuality of 'Matthew' as colouring or altering a sentence, we must remember that in accordance with the universal standard he regarded it as his duty to use his sources in his own way, and the addition of phrases peculiar to him would have come about in the natural process of authorship, and often unconsciously.

Under such conditions the faithfulness of the first Christian recorders to their originals is remarkable—the more so when we remember that they thought the End was coming almost immediately, when all need of documents would have passed away.

Although therefore we owe the remarkably exact

form in which our Lord's sayings have come down to us partly to the Jewish habit of preserving the aphorisms of teachers, and partly to the special devotion of the early disciples, we must not look in any ancient writing for our modern standards of literary exactitude, which are with difficulty attained by the aid of shorthand and typewriting, and by proof-correction after the most minute verification of details. The ancients had neither the means nor the desire for that accuracy in the smallest points which modern science has shown to be so important. It is easy, for instance, to see that both 'Matthew' and Luke used a certain freedom in transcribing from Mark; and it follows that they did so with their other sources: if we look up the marginal references in our Bibles, or, better still, if we study a parallel version, such as Thompson's *Synoptic Gospels*, we can see also that they both diverge somewhat from the common document, Q, which they used.

Who then was 'Matthew'? No personal question is involved; for the Gospel never claims to have been written by anyone of that name: but it is convenient to use the name as the designation of the writer who, about the year 85, gave to the Church, probably of Antioch, the Gospel much as we know it. A whole group of persons is however involved in the production of the Gospel in our Authorised Version: There is the compiler (or compilers) of the special source, M (*c.* 65), which 'Matthew' (*c.* 85) combined with Mark and Q to form his Gospel. Next there may be editors who made small alterations after the first issue; and there were certainly many scribes who copied the Gospels in the following centuries with

innumerable small variations, a few of which we know to have been influenced by the growing ideas about punishment, as is stated on pages 229 and 251, where we have noted some corrections in the Revised Version.[1] The scholars who much later made the Received Text, from which our Authorised Version was translated, also have their share in the ultimate authorship, as do the divines who gave us that magnificent version of the English Bible, and added by no means negligible touches of their own, as we have pointed out, e.g. on pages 131 and 145. When therefore a modern writer criticises 'Matthew,' he is not falling foul of an Apostle, or indeed of any one person at all.

A true reverence for the person of Christ has led scholars to break through the accretions which have gathered here and there on the records, in order to reach the actual teaching of the Master; and in most cases they have been rewarded. The portrait of him in the Four Gospels is more vivid, fresh, and real to us than it ever was before.

Probably none of the Gospels escaped editorial treatment: the extremer critics would put this more strongly; but I am adopting throughout this book the position of the great mass of moderate scholarship. The Little Apocalypse of Mark 13, which is described on pages 165–71, is an early instance of an addition. Careful as the Jews were in such matters, there may well have been an accretion of some apocalyptic phrases in the earliest sources of all; but we have to

[1] "Once the Gospels were regarded as inspired, they were copied with scrupulous accuracy and by the most skilful scribes available. But during the first and most of the second century they would be, for the most part, copied by amateurs—for Christians were a poor community and a secret society under the ban of the police."—B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, Macmillan, 1924, p. 35.

ignore that possibility for want of evidence, and must content ourselves with those instances about which there is little doubt.

2. *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*

1. *Matthew.*—The Gospel according to Matthew, derived though it is from Mark, Q, and M, has a certain massive unity of its own: and it is of special value because it preserves many parables and sayings from the source M, which would have otherwise been lost. But it was written for an audience very different from any of the present day,—for a community of Christians, probably at Antioch, at some time of crisis, in order to strengthen and encourage them; and the author adapts his material to his purpose of restoring hope in this baffled community, some fifteen years after the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70,[1] In spite of the lateness of his time he still stands stoutly for the belief in an immediate Second Coming. His special source, M, had been Jewish and apocalyptic: 'Matthew' indeed reconciles Jewish particularism with the liberal views of St. Paul and the Gentile Christians; but he heightens rather than modifies the eschatological element in M. Jerusalem has fallen, and the end has not come: surely, he thinks, that longed-for Parousia must now at last be at hand.

He is a Jew—a Christian rabbi—and he is fond of inserting texts from the Old Testament which must have been welcome and familiar to many of those for whom he wrote. When, for instance, in 9 : 13 he transcribes from Mark (2 : 17) the great reply to the Pharisees, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick": he adds to the

[1] See B. H. Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 516.

words of Jesus a sentence which he takes from the prophet Hosea (6 : 6)—" But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,"—an excellent point against the legalistic Jewish Christians, with which he again glosses a saying of Jesus in the twelfth chapter. He adds also certain phrases from the Old Testament and Apocalyptic Books, which have had much to do with the subsequent Christian ideas about hell. He was not himself thinking about a doctrine of eternal punishment, but was dwelling upon the hope of a speedy catastrophic return of the Lord, who would punish, not the wicked in general so much as those Roman persecutors from whom probably the trembling Church at Antioch was praying deliverance.

Among such additions are phrases like "*weeping and gnashing of teeth.*" Outside Matthew this phrase appears only once (Luke 13 : 28), when it has a perfectly relevant application to the impotent rage and disappointment of those who find themselves excluded from the kingdom. Matthew however uses the phrase six times,[1] to heighten the effect of his text, till it becomes almost a refrain, and we ask ourselves whether in some cases it has not been inserted in the margin by a copyist anxious to sharpen the warnings for the benefit of the more careless members of his Church, or as an outcry against the heathen in some time of persecution. It must surely have been a scribe who made the fate of the Evil Servant ludicrous by saying (24 : 51) that after he has been cut into two pieces he will be assigned to the place of hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In any case

[1] See pp. 238–42.

the expression is a rhetorical one, like that in Revelation (16 : 10) of those who gnawed their tongues for pain ; and it is an echo of phrases in the Enoch books and in one of the Psalms.[1]

2. *Mark.*—If contemporary editing in Matthew is responsible for the threatening comments and additions from which the idea of everlasting punishment was developed, the case is different with St. Mark ; for the most notable example in his Gospel is due to an addition of the second century.

The most striking instance perhaps in the whole Bible of the word ' damn ' (itself, as we have seen, an unjustifiable mistranslation) is in the text of the Authorised Version, " He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned " (Mk. 16 : 16). But this, as we are warned in the Revised Version, is not part of the original text at all. The real ending of St. Mark's Gospel was lost ; and the conclusion with which we are familiar was written in the second century. It has indeed great interest, because it shows us how far the ecclesiastical mind had travelled by that time from that of Christ. He could not have restricted salvation to the baptised ; nor did he say that those who did not believe would be condemned (which is the right translation of the Greek word). Even the writer of this passage did not go on to add that he who was not baptised would also be condemned : that last step in the logic of hell was left to Augustine and his like, to whom the Roman Catholic Church still to-day owes its doctrine of the damnation of the unbaptised.

It is still insufficiently realised how much the ideas

[1] See p. 238.

about hell are due to phrases (misunderstood and exaggerated) in Matthew, the Jewish-Christian and apocalyptic Gospel. Even in this book the apocalyptic element is less large than is generally supposed, and less part of its texture. In Mark there is very little.

3. *Luke.*—There is little also in Luke ; and this is the more significant because he shows no tendency to eliminate eschatological elements when he finds them. If the account of Peter's speeches in the second and third chapters of Acts is also by St. Luke, he reproduces faithfully the apocalyptic expectations which were then current. We may safely assume that he has no bias against the subject but carefully follows his sources and faithfully reproduces apocalyptic when he finds it. The conclusion is, as Cyril Emmet pointed out, of the utmost importance [1] ; for it means that the absence of menacing passages from St. Luke's reports of our Lord's sayings is not due to his having omitted anything he found, but to the fact that he keeps closer to the original than the author of Matthew does. He gives us a careful reproduction of the primitive document Q : indeed it is highly probable that he gives us the document Q both in its original order and very nearly in its original extent, and keeps also more closely to the form of the actual *logia* of Jesus. We have in fact an edition of this early document, recognisable and in large measure detachable, embedded in Luke.[2] Dr. Streeter's discovery of another source, ' Proto-Luke ' or ' L ' (embedded in

[1] L. Dougall and C. W. Emmet, *The Lord of Thought*, Student Christian Movement, 1922, p. 295. The whole chapter (xxiii) should be studied.

[2] B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 1924, pp. 289–92. For Proto-Luke see chapter viii of that book.

Luke with Q and Mark) greatly helps us in arriving at the actual sayings of our Lord, for Proto-Luke, like Mark and Q, is not a later tradition of his teaching but an early source, and gives us that teaching in a relatively unchanged form. Now it is remarkable that in Proto-Luke also there are practically no apocalyptic elements.

4. *John.*—The contribution of the Fourth Gospel is of enormous interest in another way. It is well known that John deliberately omits the apocalyptic element, and " all but substitutes for this visible return of Christ the coming of the Paraclete " ; but here also Dr. Streeter brings further light on the relations between the evangelic records.[1] He argues that the Fourth Gospel was really written by John—not the Apostle, but ' the Elder,' as John styles himself in the Second and Third Epistles. John the Evangelist is thus the John the Elder who is mentioned in the famous quotation from Papias. Now Papias, who wrote between A.D. 135 and 165, knew John the Elder, and he states that this John knew the Lord—in fact that he and a certain Aristion were disciples of the Lord ; and Papias writes in a curiously disparaging tone about the Gospel of Matthew. Of Mark he says, quoting " the Elder," that he " wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however recording in order what was either said or done " : of Matthew he seems to say in rather obscure language that the Apostle of that name did make a collection of sayings in " Hebrew " (Aramaic), but that the Greek " interpretation " of it (our ' Matthew ') is a free one. Bishop Papias evidently did not regard the Gospels as inerrant : his words as quoted by Eusebius are : " So then Matthew

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 17–22.

composed the logia in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as he could." Dr. Streeter paraphrases this remark of John the Elder, as quoted by Papias, thus :—

The Elder—thinking, partly of the Judaistic, but mainly of the Apocalyptic, sayings in Matthew—says that the *discourses* in this Greek Gospel cannot always be relied on as accurately representing the original Hebrew.

So John substitutes for the Second Coming of Christ in judgment the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete and strengthener, in his fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters ; and judgment is for him an automatic process of the individual himself, who by his own action comes to the light or remains in darkness. Thus, in the third chapter :—

God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world ; but that the world should be saved through him. He that believeth on him is not judged : he that believeth not hath been judged already. . . . And this is the judgement, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light ; for their works were evil.

So too in the twelfth chapter, the judgment is " now," and " now shall the prince of this world be cast out." And the chapter goes on to this conclusion :—

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness. And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not : for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not

my sayings, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.

John the Evangelist, therefore, while maintaining still that the rejection of the Christ incurs judgment, definitely repudiates the apocalyptic idea, and substitutes a conception of judgment that we should now describe as essentially modern.

Nothing indeed could be more drastic than his declaration in the tenth chapter—and it is evidently a comment of his own—that all who came before Jesus Christ were thieves and robbers. The false prophets and messiahs had been popular exponents of apocalyptic, and the evangelist contrasts the veracity of Christ with their crude imaginings.

The style is of course John's own ; and his readers in a Greek city like Ephesus, with the Greek tradition of historical writing, would never have supposed him to be giving a verbatim report of the sayings of Jesus ; but he is writing as a prophet inspired by the Paraclete to interpret the mind of Christ to his own generation, and he is very sure that his own traditions of the sayings of Jesus justify him in his interpretation.

This may be the place to say a word about the use of other eschatological phrases in the Fourth Gospel. In addition to his transformation of judgment into a process which has already begun ; he applies "æonian" to eternal life, and not to punishment (see page 139). The other expressions tabulated below on page 163 are absent. But there are certain phrases which Wendt and other scholars have claimed on convincing grounds to be interpolations by a later editor or scribe.[1] One

[1] For an explanation of the very few interpolations in St. John, see Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 382.

of these I have mentioned on page 132: the others, which Wendt thinks are due to the same hand, are as follows :—

A group in the sixth chapter : " And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, *but should raise it up at the last day* . . . should have eternal life ; *and I will raise him up at the last day.*" " No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him : *and I will raise him up in the last day.*" " He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life ; *and I will raise him up at the last day.*" These seem indeed to be explanatory notes, added in the margin by an editor who did not understand the Johannine concept of eternal life ; for John teaches that the eternal life has already begun and will not be interrupted by death. The other instance is in the twelfth chapter (48) : " The word that I spake, the same shall judge him *in the last day.*" Dr. Charles points out [1] that when this popular view of the resurrection is stated by Martha, " I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," her statement is not accepted by Christ, but is implicitly corrected in the pregnant words of his reply, " I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

John the Evangelist, the prophet of the life eternal, is not then responsible for the atrocious notion that people lie in their graves when they are dead, there to wait for the Last Day, when, as some popular hymns still teach, as the pictured doom proclaimed in nearly

[1] R. H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, A. and C. Black, 2nd ed., 1913, p. 430.

every medieval Church, and as great painters like Luca Signorelli and Michelangelo have unforgettably depicted, they will climb out of their tombs to hear the Last Trump.

And here for the benefit of the intelligent reader it may be well to summarise the sources of the four Gospels :—

(1) *Mark* is an original source.

(2) *Luke* is a recension of Proto-Luke or ' L ' with additional matter taken from Mark. According to Dr. Streeter's highly probable view, St. Luke wrote L about the time when Mark was writing (*c.* 65), combining with his own special knowledge the document Q, which he had lately come across. Some fifteen years after, a copy of Mark came his way, and he then produced the second and enlarged edition of his Gospel, which has come down to us. Thus our Luke is derived from L, which includes Q, and from Mark.[1]

(3) *Matthew* is derived from Q, Mark, and ' M,' the last being a primitive document from a Jewish-Christian source, containing much valuable material which would otherwise have been lost.

(4) *John.* There were four important persons of this name—John the Baptist, John the Apostle, John the Elder, who was the Evangelist, and John the Seer, who wrote Revelation. John the Elder, according to the Papias fragment, had " seen the Lord." He was in touch with Jerusalem traditions and was a prophet of great authority. He made use of Mark and Luke, but treated them very freely, and was the first to put the Gospel record into chronological order. If the above

[1] B. H. Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

interpretation of Papias is correct, the Gospel of Matthew had arrived in Ephesus shortly before John wrote the Fourth Gospel, but he declined to accept it as having apostolic authority.

3. *The Additions in Matthew*

Having explained the rejection of apocalyptic ideas in the Fourth Gospel, we are now in a position to see how much the recrudescence of the minatory element has been due to the ' First Gospel '—as it is sometimes misleadingly called. Matthew came to be considered the primary authority—his was essentially *the* Gospel to the patristic writers who had the chief part in developing the ideas of the Church; and the following table shows how large is his share in creating those elements out of which the hell-legend was developed.

	Mark	Luke	Matthew
" The End of the World " (really " The Consummation of the Age ")	0	0	5
" Day of Judgment " . . .	0	0	4
" In the Judgment," etc. . .	0	3[1]	5
" Æonian " punishment (and " æon " in Mt. 12 : 32)	0[2]	0	4
" Fire " as punishment (and " worm " in Mk. 9 : 48) . .	2	1[3]	10
" Gehenna "	3	1	7
" Outer darkness " . . .	0	0	3
" Weeping and gnashing of teeth "	0	0[4]	6
	5	5	44

[1] These are in the passages in Luke (10 : 14 ; 11 : 31–2) about Tyre and Sidon, the queen of the south, and the men of Nineveh.

[2] Mark uses " æonian " only of a sin, not of punishment. See p. 247.

[3] As " flame " in Dives and Lazarus. " Fire " occurs in Luke (3 : 9, 17) only as the teaching of John Baptist.

[4] " Weeping and gnashing " occurs in Luke (13 : 28), but not as a description of Gehenna. See pp. 238-9.

The five instances in Mark—" Fire " and " Gehenna " —all belong to the ' Offences ' passage (9 : 43–8), which is dealt with on pages 227-30. Without this passage the total of St. Mark would be reduced to nought : (the corrected text of the Revised Version has reduced the undying worm to one, i.e. Mk. 9 : 48). The traces are thus very slight in the earliest Gospel, slight also in St. Luke, and only become prominent in the Judaistic Matthew towards the end of the century. And even in Matthew there is but little compared with the lurid descriptions of a non-Christian writer like the author of 2 Enoch who also wrote in the first century. Perhaps the remarkable thing is that the Jewish-Christian writers shook themselves as free as they did from the atmosphere around them.

These additions will be dealt with in detail in Chapter V. Meanwhile let us bear in mind the danger of minimising the real severity in many sayings which remain. Very solemn, for instance, is the reply of the master of the house in the allegory of which we give the full text on pages 239 and 252 :—" I tell you, I know not whence ye are ; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." But there is an infinity of difference between such warnings of the terrible results of evil-doing and the doctrine of eternal damnation, which makes a Moloch of our heavenly Father, setting him forth as himself the most tremendous of evil-doers. The accretions which we are discussing—and their dubious authenticity is a commonplace of New Testament scholarship—do not indeed teach the doctrine of eternal damnation, and are patient of a more reasonable explanation, as many nineteenth-

century divines pointed out; but their cumulative effect is so great as to afford some excuse to those who built upon them that inhuman and ungodly doctrine.

IV. The 'Little Apocalypse'

The general effect of the trenchant passages which were added in Matthew to the sayings of our Lord was greatly heightened by another addition—the flaming description of the Last Judgment, which in Matthew immediately precedes the parables of the Ten Virgins, the Talents, and the Sheep and Goats; although indeed the description of the Judgment itself is content to mention the salvation of the elect, and does not deal with those who are lost. The descriptions in Matthew and Luke are taken from the *thirteenth chapter of Mark*, many heightening touches being added by them in their own versions. This original passage in Mark is known as the 'Little Apocalypse.' It was probably a leaflet, incorporating some sayings of Jesus, which emanated from the Church at Jerusalem during the troublous time shortly before the Siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and was incorporated by St. Mark in the belief that it was authentic. Matthew and Luke transcribed the chapter some time after the Siege, to which they seem to refer.[1] The ordinary reader can test this example of critical investigation by reading the whole chapter aloud and noticing the change of style when he comes to the parts which are taken from the original 'Little Apocalypse': not the style only but the vocabulary is different

[1] See, e.g., Dr. Vernon Bartlet, *Mark* (Century Bible), pp. 348–59, where the matter is very clearly explained.

in these interpolated sections of which the minimum must be—Mark 13 : 7 f., 14–20, 24–7, and 30 f.[1]

The length alone of this chapter shows its distinct character; for St. Mark nowhere else sets down a long discourse in his Gospel. But another contradiction besides that of style is noticeable. The coming of the Kingdom, our Lord certainly said, would take the world by surprise. "Be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" is part of a long passage which is probably from Q (Lk. 12 : 40 ff.=Mt. 24 : 44 ff.) emphasising the suddenness of the event. One of the original sayings of his which is incorporated in this Little Apocalypse (Mk. 13 : 32) says that "of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." But two verses earlier the opposite is said, "This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be accomplished," and, so far from the Parousia coming as a surprise, it is to be headed by a series of unmistakable portents—wars, earthquakes, famines and the like. The contradiction continues, "Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh. . . . Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping" (13 : 35–7); and this is enforced by Matthew (24 : 37–42; 25 : 13), in his heightened transcription of Mark's Little Apocalypse, side by side with the description of signs which will prevent them from being surprised.

The account of the evils which are to come contains similar contradictions. In some verses it is Christians

[1] These are "the verses generally regarded as insertions," with "the parallels in Matt. and Luke," as given in the very cautious Synoptic authority, Sir J. C. Hawkins, *Horæ Synopticæ*, Clarendon Press, 2nd ed., 1909, p. 116.

who are to be persecuted, and there is no promise of deliverance; they are to endure to the end (Mk. 13 : 13); in other verses, as in v. 8, it is the nations who are involved, and the destruction of Jerusalem; and the days of calamity are to be shortened.

If the comment, "Let him that readeth understand" was in the original document, it suggests that at first it was not claimed that this Apocalypse was a record of a discourse of Jesus, as it stood, but that it was a literary composition, resting on its own authority. But the comment (which could not of course have been spoken by Jesus) may have been added to a document that had grown up from the preaching of Christian prophets, such preaching having gradually assumed its present form. The sharp differentiation however of some of its sections, and their typical apocalyptic and Jewish character have led many scholars to the conclusion that the original is a *Jewish* apocalypse,[1] and that it was adapted by Christians for their own use by the incorporation of some sayings of Christ. The reader can reconstruct this hypothetical Jewish apocalypse by marking the following verses: A (The Signs) 7–8; B (The Tribulation) 14–20; C (The Parousia) 24–7; D (The Conclusion) 30–1. In this way, harmony is restored to the text, which falls into the usual divisions of Hebrew apocalyptic; and the reader has before him in all probability the original Jewish document. The unmarked verses will then be in the main from the sayings of Christ which were woven into the original, before St. Mark came across it, in order to give it a Christian

[1] Some of the authorities are given by Dr. R. H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, Black, 1913, pp. 384.

character. We cannot indeed be certain of the chapter after verse 2 [1]; verses 9–13 seem to contain reminiscences of persecutions subsequent to our Lord's time on earth ; but some passages are characteristic of him, e.g. that about the false prophets (21–3), and that about the fig tree (28–9).

We shall say a word in the next chapter about the ideas of a Parousia or second coming, which the early Christians took from the current Jewish Apocalyptic, and which was the symbol of a great truth expressed in the cataclysmic imagery of the time. But we can here try to imagine the effect upon our ancestors of such words as—

> And then shall appear the *sign of* the Son of Man *in heaven* : *and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn,* and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds *of heaven* with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels *with a great sound of a trumpet,* and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

They did not read this as a fine passage of poetry, which it is, but imagined it to be a statement deliberately made by Christ for the information of posterity. They thought that St. Matthew had heard the words uttered, and had written them down exactly as they were spoken, being guided by God into inerrancy ; and they thought that St. Mark had subsequently abridged them. They did not know that the Matthæan editor had added to the original the

[1] See, e.g., B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 1924, p. 491 : "The first two verses of Mark XIII probably belong to the same cycle of tradition as the rest of the Gospel."

words which we have put in italic; or that the original itself in Mark does not give us the words of Jesus, but an apocalyptic poem of about the year A.D. 64, incorporated with a few actual sentences of the Master which were drawn from him by the sight of the Temple and his foreseeing of the calamities which were to befall Jerusalem.

Upon the 'Little Apocalypse' of Mark 13, and its derivatives in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, were founded those pictures of the 'Doom' which once confronted our forefathers on the wall above the chancel arch whenever they went to church; and the conception was continued after the Reformation (though relieved by that time of the flaming accompaniment of 'Hell Mouth' and its hideous attendant devils—as in Plate VII) in sermons and familiar hymns, such as "Great God, what do I see and hear," and in the nineteenth century by the versions of the terrible thirteenth-century *Dies Iræ*.[1] Yet if we turn to the text of St. Mark we find no justification for this interpretation; and if we study that of St. Luke, we find him already dealing with the original in quite a different way. For Luke is writing after the siege of Jerusalem, and the vague words in Mark become with him a definite description of that event: "But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand"; "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

St. Luke has so little an idea of the inerrancy of St.

[1] "Day of wrath and doom impending:" common elsewhere, this sequence does not occur in the requiem of any English missal.

Mark that he thus alters the Apocalypse which he transcribed; and since the Parousia had not after all yet taken place, he places it at some future date, and paraphrases the Marcan description of it, adding fresh touches, such as "and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear." The events of the coming of the Son of Man, which in Mark are connected with the calamities at Jerusalem, are by Luke relegated to some time in the future. Yet people used to believe that they were all infallibly accurate reports of the same discourse delivered by Jesus; and that this discourse was further explained by the series of parables which in Matthew follow on its heels. And his twenty-fourth chapter comes to a characteristic close with the cutting in half of the servant and another insertion of "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The savage treatment of the servant, accurately translated "shall cut him asunder" (like the execution of those who were "sawn asunder" in Hebrews 11 : 37), is perhaps an early copyist's error in Q (p. 244); but the picture, which we have already noted, of a man in two pieces having his portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, is so grotesque as to suggest that it was first written in the margin by a scribe.

Our forefathers believed that this Little Apocalypse was an account (abridged by Mark from Matthew) of the Last Day when the lost would be consigned to everlasting torment. They were sometimes distressed to observe that the Judgment Day had not yet happened, although some eighteen hundred years had elapsed since Christ, as they thought, had said, "This

generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished." But we are relieved of these insuperable difficulties. The fly-leaf containing the Little Apocalypse, written about the year 64, had very immediate events in view; and if St. Luke, writing about ten years later, and after the Siege of Jerusalem, looks to the future for a complete fulfilment, he was not without justification: for the historian, as he gazes back upon the past, can see that the portentous events of that period do indeed constitute an 'end of the æon,' and that the writers of the second generation after Christ were but putting into the picture-language of the current apocalyptic what was indeed for them a second coming of the Son of Man.

CHAPTER IV

APOCALYPTIC

I. Jewish

1. *The Earlier Jewish Ideas*

OUR grandfathers who believed in eternal damnation must have felt a certain inadequacy in the Old Testament contribution to their faith; for one of their proof-texts was the line from Ecclesiastes, "Where the tree falleth, there shall it be." But the pessimist who wrote that book had no hope of a resurrection, no expectation of a Messiah, and indeed no eschatology—that is, no idea of the Last Things—at all. Man, he is simply pointing out, is the creature of circumstances and can no more control his fate than the weather, or than a tree can shift its position when it has been blown down.

Naturally the long chain of books which are included in the word 'Scripture' express varying ideas, for they are the record of the gradual development of a nation's faith and the growth of light over the original pagan darkness of Semitic thought. The Old Testament indeed contributes little either way; because the Jews were concerned with this life and with the destiny of the Nation. They thought of Sheol as the Greeks thought of Hades, sometimes (as in the more archaic view) as a place where the dead retained a certain amount of consciousness and a keen interest in the fortunes of their descendants, as when Rachel mourns for her children in Jeremiah (31: 15); sometimes as a place of forgetfulness, silence, and destruction—"The dead know not anything," says the same

VIII.—St Francis protecting the World from Christ
(*By Rubens*)

author of Ecclesiastes; "for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest." So it is in Job, and so also in many Psalms: "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Thus the 115th Psalm; and the 88th is even more explicit:—

> Wilt thou show wonders to the dead?
> Shall they that are deceased arise and praise thee?
> Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
> Or thy faithfulness in Destruction?
> Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
> And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

There was thus no thought of punishment in Sheol, or any distinction after death between the destinies of the righteous and the ungodly: at best the life beyond was but a feeble reflection of that on the earth, and the attestation to personal immortality is meagre in the Old Testament. Even as late as the period of the Gospels, when the expectation of a resurrection was established among the Pharisees, the Sadducees were not reckoned unorthodox because they denied it.

After the Exile, that is, in the fifth century (the age, in another centre, of Æschylus and Socrates), new ideas had indeed begun to mix with the old. The very weakness of the Nation now caused men to grasp more strongly the once feeble idea of individuality: they had felt as bees might be supposed to think of themselves in relation to the hive. This failure to consider the individual, though difficult for us to realise, is a characteristic of primitive peoples: it caused them to look for personal survival only in memory, and through their children, and to think of their own little lives as poured into the Nation which was the unit that really mattered. Thus they had no conception of a Day of

Judgment in another life, when rewards and punishments would be meted out to each man ; but thought rather of a Day of the Lord in which the living only would be judged, and Israel would be saved, and the ideal kingdom of Jahweh's people established on the earth. But now the sense of separate personal existence grew more clear in the fifth and fourth centuries ; and in certain writers the hope of a blessed immortality appeared. They had no thought of the ungodly in their minds ; for the hope grew up from their own experience of God : since they were so closely joined to him, this union could not be dissolved by death, they felt, and the life of divine fellowship must continue. Thus the claim which is also an assurance is made in the 16th Psalm that the holy soul shall not be left in the void subsistence or non-existence of Sheol :—

> I have set the Lord always before me . . .
> Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth :
> My flesh also shall dwell in safety.
> For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol ;
> Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.

So also the 49th and 73rd Psalms look forward to some more permanent life with God ; but there is little else of the kind, and the popular theology remained untouched by these isolated aspirations. It was Jewish Apocalyptic that brought the belief in a blessed future life, and with it the ideas of a personal judgment and of the final punishment of the wicked.

2. *Jewish Apocalyptic*

Until the present century little attention had been given to Jewish apocalyptic literature and little was known about it ; most of the books are indeed of quite

recent discovery. Thus what is practically a new realm of knowledge has been opened to scholars of the present day; and it is knowledge of the utmost importance, for it enables us for the first time to understand properly the vocabulary of the first century, and to appreciate the religious atmosphere in which the teaching of Jesus Christ was given and recorded.

The Jewish Apocalyptic writers come after the Prophets, and develop the earlier teaching by different methods. An 'Apocalypse' means an unveiling; and the writers of such books describe visions or intuitions which they believe to reveal the events connected with the end of the age. There are Apocalyptic elements in some later books of the Old Testament: with Joel, about 400 B.C., Prophecy is changing into Apocalyptic; this is continued in Zechariah, a century, or two centuries, later; and in Daniel, written 165 B.C., when the subjection of the Jews was complete, we have a book that is a typical example of this class of literature. Thereafter the canon of the Old Testament was closed; but already, some ten years or more before Daniel, had appeared the first part of the great Apocalyptic series which goes by the name of Enoch. For about three centuries, from *c.* 200 B.C. till the end of the first century of the Christian era, Apocalyptic is the chief medium through which the spokesmen of the oppressed Jewish nation poured out their hopes and their speculations about the eternal issues.

The Jews were not a philosophic people, but in this peculiar form, vivid, pictorial, overstrained, they were developing a Semitic philosophy of religion. Side by side with another and very different school of Hebrew thought—Scribism—the Apocalyptists arrived

at a clear and definite conception of immortality. By the first century before Christ they saw in Paradise an intermediate abode of the righteous : and at the time when Christ was on the earth, Paradise (or Heaven) was conceived as the final dwelling-place of just men, while Sheol or Hades was an intermediate state where rest was reserved for the righteous, and pain for the ungodly. Fantastic and fierce as is much in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the various books which go by the name of *Enoch*, and the rest of these works of unknown authorship—catastrophic, vengeful, crude, as they are, they brought the Hebrew mind into the range of the eternal values ; and they were the first to grasp the great and pregnant idea that the national history with which they were so violently preoccupied was yet part of a larger whole which included the future of the human race, so far as they were able to conceive it. Stained though their vision was by notions of savage cruelty and of unethical vengeance, they blazed out the first conception of " a new heaven and a new earth."

Thus, in the second century before Christ, Jewish literature passes into a region of definite ideas about the destinies of the individual and the nation alike.[1] In the second century the idea of a resurrection is indeed still unfixed, and in any case it is for Israelites only ; but both a preliminary and final judgment are clearly laid down : there are four places for the departed—Paradise, an Abyss of fire for the rebellious

[1] For a full and documented account of Apocalyptic during its existence between the later Old Testament books and the Revelation of John the Seer at the end of the New Testament, see Dr. R. H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life*, Black (2nd ed., 1913).

angels, Sheol, which is partly intermediate and partly final, and Gehenna. The word Gehenna as a place of punishment is not actually used in the Old Testament, though it is implied in two very late passages (Isaiah 50 : 11 and 66 : 24), which are not earlier than the third century B.C.—the latter includes the phrase about the worm dying not and fire being unquenched—and also in the passage from Daniel (12 : 2), in the second century, about some awaking to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting abhorrence. The idea of Gehenna thus appears first in certain early apocalypses which just got into the Old Testament, and was continued in such examples of second-century Apocalyptic as the earlier parts of the Book of Enoch ; but it is still not freed in them from political associations, since it is for apostate Jews that the punishment is reserved.

We have now found the origin of " Hell." It began among a down-trodden people, crying for vengeance upon their enemies. These enemies were of two sorts, Gentiles and apostate Jews : the older view of the Gentiles had been simply that they were destroyed, and this continues, with reservations sometimes on behalf of converts or of friendly nations, throughout the three centuries of Apocalyptic. Those Jews, on the other hand, who sided with the enemies of Israel and became apostate would have their everlasting punishment in the Valley of Hinnom, now conceived as a spiritual " Gehenna," and described over and over again, in such fashion as this :—

And there are all sorts of tortures in that place, savage darkness and impenetrable gloom ; and there is no light there, but a gloomy fire is always burning,

and a fiery river goes forth. And all that place has fire on all sides, and on all sides cold and ice; thus it burns and freezes. And the prisoners are very savage. And the angels terrible and without pity, carrying savage weapons, and their torture is unmerciful. And I said, Woe! Woe! How terrible is this place![1]

This idea of a hell was not derived from the Old Testament, nor from Egypt, Babylon, or Greece, but probably from Zoroastrianism, with which the Jews had come in contact in their exile; and it is used mainly as a threat, not against the wicked as such, but against the enemies of Israel, and of Jahweh conceived as the God of Israel—for the notion of a tribal god is not yet completely superseded. Such teaching was unethical, and it was inconsistent also with the pure monotheism which other branches of Hebrew literature were upholding—for, if Jahweh was the God of the whole world, then he must be the Saviour of the Gentile as well as of the patriotic Jew. It was the fruit of a period of deep misery and national distress; it was transitional, and was corrected by the more philosophic schools of Shammai and Hillel in the first century A.D., and in the Mishna and the Talmuds of the third and following centuries, but it found its way into early Christianity, and influenced some of the books of the New Testament. This teaching of the Apocalyptists, so far as it bears upon our subject, is thus summed up by Dr. Charles :—

The doctrine of eternal damnation also is a Judaistic survival of a still more grossly immoral character.

[1] 2 Enoch 10 : 2–4. This interesting book only came to light in 1907.

We shall do no more here than point out that this doctrine originated in Judaism when monotheism had become a lifeless dogma, and Jewish particularism reigned supreme, and when a handful of the pious could not only comfortably believe that God was the God of the Jew alone, and only of a very few of these, but also could imagine that part of their highest bliss in the next world would consist in witnessing the torment of the damned.[1]

The Jews dropped their apocalyptic books after the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and they wisely guided national thought into deeper channels. The notion that the Kingdom of God was an external state, which was just on the point of being manifested, was clung to for a while longer by Christians; and thus the apocalyptic books were preserved by them, and not by the Synagogue. After a time the Church also gave up the hope of a speedy Parousia; and the Jewish Apocalypses were altogether forgotten. So were most of the Christian imitations; but one Christian apocalypse, the Book of Revelation, eventually won its way into the canon of the New Testament, where it is deservedly held in high estimation.

We have been obliged to dwell upon the fierce and mistaken side which the disasters of Jewry gave to this literature; because unfortunately this character was fixed upon Christian tradition by the literalist Latin mind—especially in the Punic-Latin atmosphere of Tertullian and Augustine of Hippo. But the Apocalypses themselves are yet a characteristic expression of the heroic age of Jewish history, when the nation tried, and failed, to realise in action the

[1] R. H. Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

part of God's peculiar people. This has been finely stated by Professor Burkitt :—

> And those who cling to the belief that human history is not altogether meaningless and that it marches, however slowly and haltingly, to a definite goal ought to regard the ideas enshrined in books like Enoch with sympathy. It is by this doctrine of a purpose underlying history, and of an unerring Judgement to be pronounced upon it somewhen, somewhere, that these books still strike a chord in our hearts to-day. . . . Enoch has the faults of a pioneer. His work is rough, he is unacquainted with the country, he often loses his way. But his guiding star is a belief that the confused drama of History is not without a purpose, and that in the end the Judge of all the Earth can and will do right.[1]

II. Apocalyptic in the New Testament

There are two main apocalypses in the New Testament, the Revelation of John the Seer (who is not the same as the writer of the Gospel and the Epistles—John the Elder) ; and the " Little Apocalypse " of Mark 13, with the derived passages in Luke and Matthew. Another passage, sometimes called " The Apocalypse of Q," occurs in Luke 17, and is described on page 207 below ; and probably there is a third incorporated in 2 Thessalonians 2.

The Book of Revelation, which is also called "The Apocalypse," teaches the doctrine of a Millennium, a doctrine never accepted by the Church : this book, together with two others of apocalyptic character, Jude and 2 Peter, was not included among the

[1] F. C. Burkitt, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Oxford University Press, 1914, p. 33.

'acknowledged writings' of the Canon by Eusebius the historian who wrote in the time of Constantine, *c.* 325, nor by St. Chrysostom and other authorities (though the third local Council of Carthage, in 397, enumerated the contents of the New Testament as at present received); and they remained in doubt even beyond the fourth century, the New Testament Canon not being indeed finally determined synodically for East and West till the Quinisext Council of 691. It is in these books whose position was for long doubtful in the Church that the apocalyptic ideas are most prominent—Revelation, Jude, 2 Peter, Hebrews, and James. They appear also in St. Paul's two earliest letters, the First and the Second Epistles to the Thessalonians; and they are present also in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

St. Paul's later writings are increasingly free from apocalyptic ideas; and this freedom is shown also in those of John the Elder—the Evangelist—and in the other books of the New Testament, with the important exception of the three Synoptic Gospels. To make this clear, let us tabulate these books, at the same time redressing the glaring chronological confusion. The books having marked apocalyptic elements are in *italic* :—

THE EARLIER CANON

1 & 2 Thessalonians, c. 51[1]	Philemon, *c.* 61
1 & 2 Corinthians, c. 55–6	Ephesians, *c.* 61
Galatians	Philippians, *c.* 61
Romans, *c.* 57	? 1 & 2 Timothy
Colossians, *c.* 61	? Titus

[1] The date of St. Paul's Epistles is within a year or two of A.D. 51–63. That of Mark, *c.* 65; of Luke, *c.* 80; of Matthew, *c.* 85, though some would place it five or ten years later.

MARK, *c.* 65	JOHN, *c.* 90 [1]
LUKE, *c.* 80	1 John
Acts	? 1 Peter
MATTHEW, *c.* 85	

BOOKS INCLUDED AFTER THE FOURTH CENTURY

James	*Revelation*, *c.* 95
Hebrews	*Jude*
2 & 3 John	*2 Peter*

1. *St. Paul's Epistles*

It is generally agreed that St. Paul's thought progressed in four stages, the principal change taking place between the second and third, as has been admirably set out by Dr. Charles.[2]

First Period (1 and 2 Thessalonians). The current eschatology is accepted: the Parousia is expected in the writer's lifetime, and with it the Day of Judgment, vengeance on the ungodly, and æonian destruction —doubtless conceived as final.[3] "In this harsh forecast of the future the Apostle has hardly outgrown the narrow intolerance of Jewish eschatology." [4]

Second Period (1 Corinthians). St. Paul is concerned with proclaiming the resurrection of the righteous, and with the triumph of Christ, all things being put under his feet, that God may be all in all.[5]

Third Period (2 Corinthians, Romans). St. Paul has now put away the Jewish idea of a Man of Sin and a great apostasy and proclaims (in Romans 11) a

[1] Accepting the date 90–5 with B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, London, 1924: the Epistles would thus be about the same time. Revelation was probably written during the persecution of Domitian, who died A.D. 96. Jude and 2 Peter may have both been written in the second century.

[2] *A Critical History*, Black, 1913, cap. xi.

[3] E.g. 1 Thess. 5 : 23 ; 5 : 2 ; 4 : 6 ; 2 Thess. 1 : 9.

[4] R. H. Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

[5] 1 Cor. 15.

progressive transformation of mankind, and the conversion of the whole world. The Parousia is still thought to be at hand (Rom. 13 : 11–12). The resurrection of the righteous follows immediately on death (2 Cor. 5 : 1–8) ; all must appear for judgment (Rom. 14 : 10), and each will be judged " according to what he hath done " (2 Cor. 5 : 10), and some are thought of as those " that are perishing " (2 Cor. 2 : 15) ; and for them are reserved " wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil " (Rom. 2 : 5–9). It is not unlikely from such passages as this and that about vessels fitted for destruction in Romans 9 : 22, that he conjectured annihilation for those who rejected the possibility of improvement.

Fourth Period (Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians). There is one other sentence besides those we have already mentioned which used to be quoted as an argument for damnation ; but it is merely a cry of indignation—" they are the enemies of the cross of Christ : whose end is ruin,[1] whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things " (Phil. 3 : 18). For the rest, the general thought of these later epistles is that of the final redemption of all creatures ; though St. Paul seems also still to have contemplated the possibility of some remaining obdurate and thus achieving their own extinction. Such annihilationism is a denial of endless torment : " The one thing that is perfectly plain about his view as to the fate of those rejected at the judgment is that

[1] '*Apōleia*' (see p. 144), translated ' destruction ' in the Authorised Version and ' perdition ' for no good reason in the Revised Version. The word means ' destruction ' not necessarily irremediable, 'loss, waste.'

there is no room in his thought for the idea of everlasting punishment."[1] We are dealing with St. Paul's universalism—" to sum up all things in Christ " —on page 284.

It must always be remembered that there are two mutually contradictory ideas in Christian apocalyptic as we still see it around us—in one the Other World is a *time*, in the other, a *place*. (1) The first is the teaching of Jewish apocalyptic, the expectation of a Day of Judgment which individuals experience simultaneously : this is illustrated, for instance, in Michelangelo's picture of the Last Judgment. (2) The second is the conception of the next world as a place, which individuals enter one by one as they die ; this conception grew up at the end of the first century, as the prospect of an immediate Judgment Day began to fade. Thus there arose a second series of Christian apocalypses, commencing so far as we know, with the Apocalypse of Peter, which was discovered in 1892. In this book each soul is taken at death to the place it deserves ; and an attempt is made, more or less, to ' make the punishment fit the crime.' The Apocalypse of Peter was condemned as heretical ; but it survived in countless imitations, and at last was set forth on the grandest scale in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante.[2]

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*

This book has nothing on the subject of hell ; and its mildness of tone is in marked contrast with Revelation, since it also deals with struggle and persecution.

[1] H. Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement*, Macmillan, 1919, p. 141.
[2] F. C. Burkitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 44–5. For the Visions of Paul and of the Celtic writers, see here above, pp. 92–4.

Without going into the question of how far the text is that of St. Luke or whether the speeches are condensed reports, we may here note three groups of speeches.

The two men in white dresses of 1 : 10 are not stated to be angels ; but the assumption that they were has greatly influenced subsequent thought about the judgment. They may have been priests or Essenes who had privately become followers of Jesus (both priests and Essenes wore white) ; and their address, " Ye men of Galilee," suggests a certain contempt for the provincial disciples. They said that " this Jesus "—such is the phrase recorded—" which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." We conclude that the historian expected the Parousia, but saw that it was not for him " to know times or seasons " (1 : 7).

St. Peter's speech in the second chapter declares that Christ is already exalted and has poured forth the Holy Spirit. In the third chapter he speaks of " the times of the restoration of all things " ; but, since he has not yet been converted to the inclusion of the Gentiles (which is related in chapter 10), he could not have meant the universalism that has so often been deduced from this text. The speech seems to refer to the fulfilment of all that had been declared by the prophets,[1] and has in view the establishment of a Messianic kingdom upon earth.

There are two references to the judgment in St. Paul's speeches as they are recorded in Acts. In 17 : 31, " inasmuch as he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by

[1] G. Dalman, *Worte Jesu*, Leipzig, 1898, vol. i, pp. 145–6.

the man whom he hath ordained" ; and in 24 : 25, "And as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgement to come, Felix was terrified."

3. *Other Epistles*

The books which give most countenance to ideas of annihilationism or of enduring punishment are those which have also two other characteristics : they are the very books which show most clearly the influence of contemporary Jewish eschatological thought ; and they are books which were not at first accepted as canonical by the Church. These remarks apply less to some than to others, and least of all to 1 Peter.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, though quoted by Clement of Rome, *c.* A.D. 95, was not among the 'acknowledged writings' of the third century ; in the fourth, however, Chrysostom, while rejecting Revelation, accepts both Hebrews and James. This epistle contains a strong apocalyptic element, and regards the Day of Judgment as imminent (10 : 25–30). It seems to contemplate annihilation in the ruin or destruction (*apōleia*) of the wicked, and thus would exclude everlasting punishment ; but the anonymous writer uses strong language of the Jewish type—"a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (10 : 26–31).

James.—This nobly simple epistle was not part of the third-century canon, and did not obtain universal acceptance till the fifth century. Its eschatology is primitive : the Judgment is close at hand, when the

Lord will come (5 : 8–9). Not eternal punishment, but death is what sin brings forth (1 : 15), and " he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins " (5 : 20). Immortality is in fact conceived in the old way as something to be won, and, since the wicked will not win it, they will not share in the new kingdom which God will establish on the earth.

1 *Peter*.—In this Epistle the Judgment is still regarded as imminent, but the outlook is widened in a remarkable manner. The fate of the ungodly is to be terrible—" if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear ? " (4 : 18) ; but an important advance is made ; the scope of redemption is extended to the other life :—

> Christ . . . in the spirit . . . went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient (3 : 18–20). For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit (4 : 6).

These passages, which from early times took hold of the imagination of the Church as the ' Harrowing of Hell '—the rescue from hades of persons who had died before Christ—may not be very wide in its scope ; but it definitely suggests a further possibility for those who have crossed the threshold of death ; and it passes beyond the current Jewish apocalyptic to the idea of the moralisation of hades.

The speech of St. Peter in Acts 2 : 31 may possibly imply the same activity in the descent into hades, when he quotes from the 16th Psalm, and argues from it that

Christ could not be left in hades. But this is doubtful: the passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (4 : 10) is more definite, and may imply a mission in hades—"He that ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." The passage in Romans 10 : 7 (where St. Paul is quoting largely from Deuteronomy, 30 : 11–14), about descending into the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead, may also bear upon the work in hades; but it is too uncertain to deserve more than a mere reference in this connection.

Jude and 2 Peter.—The epistle of *Jude*, one of the "disputed books" of Eusebius, but included in the Muratorian Canon of the third century, is based upon the Apocalypse of 'Enoch,' and quotes Enoch by name in verse 14 as "the seventh from Adam." In its invective against certain men who have crept in privily it compares them with the fallen angels of Enoch 6, etc., and of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, where according to Enoch (67 : 6) these angels are burnt continually—words which Jude reproduces (7)—"suffering the punishment of æonian fire." Being thus very close to the Jewish ideas of the time, it has supplied texts which were often quoted in defence of eternal punishment in the times when this epistle was thought to be the work of an Apostle.

2 Peter is based upon Jude, and by most scholars is held to be a pseudonymous work of the second century. Origen regarded it with suspicion, and doubts were felt about it by Eusebius and by Jerome in the fourth century. In its invective and its

eschatology it closely resembles Jude, indeed it incorporates almost the whole of that somewhat earlier document. The fallen angels are thus cited, and they are consigned to Tartarus (the only use of this word in the Bible); the destruction of ungodly men is mentioned in the third chapter, where also (7 : 10–12) the destruction of the world by fire is foretold (such a thing being nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament), but the author, writing at a late date, feels it necessary to explain (3 : 3–4, 8–9) why this has not already happened.

4. *Revelation*

In the splendid imagery of this great book the sharp contrast between heaven and hell is unmistakably set forth; and we can hardly wonder that the doctrine of eternal punishment was established from it in ages that imagined it to be the work of that Beloved Disciple who would reflect in a special way the most intimate thought of Christ. John the Seer is quite free from Jewish particularist prejudice; but, writing during the persecution of Domitian (*c.* A.D. 95), he is without mercy to the enemies of the Church: there is a "lake of fire that burneth with brimstone" into which the Beast and the False Prophet are cast (19 : 20), and the devil (20 : 10); and the part of all wicked persons "shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (21 : 8): into this lake death and hades are also cast (20 : 14). John the Seer is in fact a real apocalyptist; his Revelation has little affinity with any other New Testament writings, and might be classed with Enoch or the Assumption of Moses, if it were not far finer

as literature. He brushes the ungodly aside without pity, and with no concern except for the glorious future, when " there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away " (21 : 4). Although Revelation was accepted by most writers, from Justin Martyr in the second century onwards, its doctrine of a millennium was never agreed to by the Church ; Eusebius expressed doubt about the book, Cyril of Alexandria excluded it, and Jerome suggested that it should be placed in a middle class between the canonical and apocryphal books. The Eastern Church held out against its canonicity long after the time of Chrysostom : in fact, as Dr. Swete says, " No book in the New Testament with so good a record was so long in gaining general acceptance."

III. The Synoptic Gospels

In the three Synoptic Gospels there is a like infiltration of ideas from the atmosphere of Jewish Apocalyptic in which Hebrew thought was saturated. As in the case of the Epistles, the element is slight, even in Matthew (except for the " Little Apocalypse " interpolation of Mark 13, and the transcriptions of it in Matthew and Luke), and it is free from the fiercer elements of the originals. Nineteenth-century writers had little opportunity of comparing the Gospels with this background ; for most of the Apocalypses have been but recently discovered : we now know that there is nothing in any part of the pre-Christian literature to modify the idea of God's vengeance upon sinners as implacable and insatiable, and that no higher way of overcoming evil had been thought of,

in all the ancient world, than the power to threaten and to punish.

Jewish Apocalyptic had shared this unethical character; but its dreams had not been developed into a set philosophy nor exalted into dogma; for it was popular, and it did not use the method of the theologians but expressed itself in lambent, fleeting images.

This Jewish Apocalyptic was not great as literature. Its authors had indeed taken over the symbolic language of the prophets, and had spoilt it, treating poetry as if it were prose; but crude and conventional as it often was, the language was a natural medium for preachers in the first century and could be put to the highest uses. It could in fact become poetry again—as it had been in the hands of the great prophets. We should thus expect a certain amount of such imagery in the sayings of a prophet like Jesus; and we should expect that any attempts to expand his sayings would be more conventional in their use of the medium, and would make considerable use of quotation.

If the reader will look up any Bible commentaries except some of the most modern, he will observe that they have a common characteristic: they ignore two of the most powerful elements in literary expression, humour and poetry. In the former, they took away the smile from the face of Jesus, as Dr. Glover has said[1]—to whom we owe so much for drawing attention both to the humour and to the

[1] In *The Conflict of Religions in the Roman Empire*, Methuen, 1909, cap. 4; and in his more recent studies of the character of our Lord. Professor Burkitt drew attention to the 'playfulness' in the words of Jesus in his *Gospel History*, Edinburgh, 1911, p. 140 ff.

love of beauty in Christ. As for poetry, without it the highest things would remain unsaid; for it is the only way in which the more subtle and profound intuitions of the mind can by words be either expressed or understood. It is to poetry that the most sublime parts of the Bible belong, or to that form of exalted prose which is of the same nature; and the reason why the sayings and stories of our Lord reveal their meaning with increasing radiance as the ages pass, is that their essence always is poetic, and sometimes indeed their form also.

Jesus then, we should suppose, must have used apocalyptic diction when speaking about the critical issues of life—as after all we do ourselves even in the twentieth century—but he uses it with a humanity which transforms it into something immeasurably greater; for he has the insight, the sense of beauty in common things, the piercing gentleness, of the true poet, and he speaks sometimes with a quiet humour which is entirely lacking in the apocalyptists, and in some poets too. I open two books at random, and set them down here as I find them. They illustrate the difference :—

And thus the Lord commanded the kings and the mighty and the exalted, and those who dwell on the earth, and said, Open your eyes and lift up your horns, if ye are able to recognise the Elect One. And the Lord of Spirits seated him on the throne of his glory, and the spirit of righteousness was poured out upon him, and the word of his mouth slays all the sinners.—*Book of Enoch*, 62 : 1.

What went ye out in the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out to see? a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.—*Luke* 7 : 25.

Jesus certainly thought of a crisis, or of a judgment (the two words are the same in Greek), and at times

that crisis may well have seemed to him near, though he expressly said that he knew neither the day nor the hour, for such knowledge belonged only to the Father. Freed thus from the measure of time, he looked for the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth; but he sublimated the language at his disposal; and in parable after parable he gave a new meaning to the idea of the Kingdom. History is indeed the record of crises and renewals; and, vast though the time-process is, the issue may be most truly summed up as judgment followed by the Coming of God, so long as we remember that a 'crisis' is not isolated but is continuous with the process of development,—a process which after all he did illustrate by the Leaven and the Mustard Seed.

1. *Jesus and Apocalyptic*

In 1906 Albert Schweitzer published his forcible and candid book, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, which was afterwards translated as *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.[1] He described with great acumen and in an admirable spirit the various attempts to portray the character of Jesus, from Lessing's edition of Reimarus' MS. in 1778, to Wrede's *Messiasgeheimnis* in 1901; he analysed the various books which make up this great work of a century, their learning, intellectual brilliancy and denseness, their insight, and their blindness; and to the vast tottering structure he added an attic of his own. That last chapter of his book marked the reaction against the former attempts of writer after writer to make a Christ in his own

[1] Tübingen, 1906. Tr. W. Montgomery, Black, 1910.

image, a modern, liberal, and Teutonic image; in its profound religious sincerity it made—as it intended and deserved to make—an epoch. During the last twenty years theologians have learnt from Schweitzer to think of Jesus more as he really was in his inimitable grandeur, to realise how much turns upon his claim to Messiahship, and to value the gospel of hope which apocalyptic expresses, and also the 'otherworldly' side of the teaching of Jesus,—an aspect which in some quarters had been forgotten in the new enthusiasm, not less true, of a social gospel for the poor and oppressed in this world. The weakness of Schweitzer's book was that it was—almost necessarily—one-sided, and narrowed down to one idea the universal message of Jesus, which has inspired such countless movements for betterment. He showed great learning in his mastery of the histories that have been written about our Lord, but he is not a specialist on the very subject of eschatology upon which his hypothesis rests; and he has made a somewhat reckless use of the results of New Testament criticism, preferring Matthew to the earlier sources whenever it suits his argument, and rejecting as 'unhistorical' every adverse passage, as so many others have done. Although he recognises with other scholars of the present day that Matthew is dependent on Mark and Q, he gives us what is really a new Matthæan gospel, and thus concludes—as a writer who pins his faith on the passage peculiar to Matthew is bound to do—that Jesus was convinced of his immediate return in glory, and therefore was the victim of a delusion, although his greatness remains, according to Schweitzer, transcendent.

I cannot avoid thinking that some of our theologians have been rather overwhelmed by Schweitzer's fine personality, partly because the rather arid subject of Apocalyptic had a little distracted their minds, and partly because of the tendency to accept uncritically books written in German (in striking contrast to the Germans themselves—Schweitzer, for instance, hardly mentions an English writer in all his many references). English-speaking theologians have been a little inclined to forget that German books are, like other books, sometimes good, sometimes bad, occasionally brilliant and mistaken, and to assume that the scholarship of every book in that not universally understood language must be immaculate. I have myself recently had to point this out in the case of another book which, had it been written in English, no one—and certainly no German—would have taken seriously; and I have noticed how many English writers tend to lean rather too heavily on the German who is fashionable at the moment, Harnack once, and then Eucken, Schweitzer, F. von Hügel, Rudolf Otto, and even men like Ludwig who have no great reputation in Germany itself. It would perhaps be good for the world in general if there were a little more reciprocity. In this matter of the belief in an immediate second coming, which at one time St. Paul shared with the other Apostles, I venture to think that the verdict of an English layman, W. L. Courtney, in *The Literary Man's New Testament*, comes nearer the truth: "Either the apostles were in error about the doctrine of Christ, or Christ himself had taught them what was not true. There is no way out of the difficulty. Either Christ himself based his whole teaching on a misunderstanding or an error of

fact, or else his own apostles misunderstood him, did not know what he meant by his Kingdom of Heaven." There was, he concludes, some unconscious misreporting of thoughts " contrary to their preconceived ideas," during the era when the Gospels were written.

Many theologians have tended in recent years to accept Schweitzer's theory—that a Parousia in the literal sense was the centre of Christ's message, the belief that he would come immediately on the clouds and destroy his enemies. In accepting this view, some have sought to refine it and give it an allegorical interpretation. But it is better to be frank and to admit that, if Jesus were thus convinced that he would shortly return from heaven in supernatural glory he was mistaken. For no such Parousia has happened. There is no advantage in shirking the dilemma by explaining away words which Matthew clearly held in their stark literal sense.

Is it not more likely that the extreme eschatological school is mistaken, and that the passages about the Parousia, as we have them, are additions to the teaching of Jesus ? This does not mean that they were deliberate interpolations. The earliest records were preserved by men who went about teaching and explaining ; and, with all their reverence for the actual words of the Master (which resulted in a striking fidelity to his very turns of phrase), it was inevitable that those who lived in the daily and joyous expectation of a glorious Second Coming should have sometimes coloured the sayings of Jesus with phrases from the Jewish Apocalyptic with which they were familiar. The remarkable thing, perhaps, is that they did it so little.

2. *Apocalyptic Accretions*

Now the weakness of Schweitzer's argument—and surely it is a fatal weakness—is that it rests just on those passages which are proved by purely literary considerations to be additions to the earlier texts. He regards as the pivot of his theory the verse in Matthew (10 : 23), " Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." But it is precisely this verse that is absent from Mark : the sentence is an addition by Matthew, who here seems to conflate with Mark and Q a third source which is apparently a Judaistic version of the Charge to the Twelve. A later composite sentence, it cannot possibly represent the exact words spoken by Jesus.[1] The situation which it reflects did not come into existence till the time of the missionary journeys of St. Paul (*c.* A.D. 47–57) ; and the beginning of the verse, " When they persecute you in this city, flee into the next," is a justification of flight from persecution, which reflects the policy of a section of the Church long after the lifetime of our Lord.

Schweitzer's theory of a central mistake in the mind of Jesus breaks down thus at its very foundation. The passages in the Gospels which look for a speedy return of the Lord in judgment occur almost entirely in interpolations that an unbiased criticism rejects, especially in the Little Apocalypse of Mark 13 (see page 165), and in certain additions in Matthew.

[1] For further particulars see B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, London (Macmillan), 1924, pp. 255, 520. The Judaistic version in Matthew's source, " M ", may have grown up during the controversy about the mission to the Gentiles which almost split the Church.

Now the ancients had no devices such as we possess for distinguishing editorial comments by quotation marks, brackets, or footnotes: a comment was inserted in the text or in the margin, and its origin was soon lost sight of. It was natural that the author of Matthew, writing during some great fervour of expectation, should have added a note of urgency here and there, thinking that his words would in a few weeks be swept away by the Coming of the Lord, and never dreaming that the world would last indefinitely and that his book would come to be regarded as part of the infallible word of God. We owe to this Gospel, among many other of our greatest (and least apocalyptic) treasures, the parables of the Hid Treasure, the Pearl of Great Price, the Tares, and the Drag Net, as well as two others which Luke also has preserved for us. It is significant that Matthew is not interested in pointing the moral of the four of these parables to which it is difficult to give an apocalyptic interpretation, while, as Dr. Streeter says, "he goes out of his way to add an explanation in terms of catastrophic eschatology to the parables of the Tares and the Drag Net." [1]

The tendency to enlarge on the idea of a Second Coming began probably in very early times, when there were no written documents, and the message of the Gospel was delivered orally by the 'prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers,' of whom St. Paul writes. There may thus be some accretion even in the source that is known by the symbol Q: some there is in Mark; but in Matthew the tendency to exaggerate and conventionalise the original is much stronger.

In a few cases we can trace the process, as in the

[1] See p. 240.

following saying which we happen to have in five versions—two versions, namely, of Q (copied with slight variations by Luke and Matthew), an independent version of Mark (derived perhaps from the oral tradition of another city), and two versions of this Marcan text copied and altered by Luke and Matthew.

There is no doubt that our left-hand column below represents the document Q ; for it is copied by both Matthew and Luke, with some alterations (perhaps on Luke's part), as is shown in the footnote. If Matthew has in this case transcribed the original the more exactly, then the original was not apocalyptic, but was given an apocalyptic turn by Luke in the alteration to " him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

If a mere conjecture may be allowed for a moment, I would suggest that there may be expansion even in Q, the second part about denying Christ having crept in as a warning against apostasy in an era of persecution ; and that the original saying of Christ may have been simply the words in the top of our left-hand column. " Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven." In that case it would be just the original saying which disappears in the other columns. We must be on our guard against the allurements of subjective interpretation ; but these opening words are certainly more characteristic of Jesus than the counter statement, " But whosoever shall deny," etc. ; and there are other instances of the addition of threats by editors or copyists who were anxious to prevent their fellow-Christians from denying their faith.

Strictly literary criticism however shows that in the

Q	*Mark* 8 : 38 ff.	*Luke* 9 : 26 ff.	*Matthew* 16 : 27 ff.
Matthew 10 : 32–3 (Luke 12 : 8–9)			
Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him *will I*[1] also confess before *my Father which is in heaven.*[2] But whosoever shall deny me before men, him *will* *I also deny*[3] *before my Father which is in heaven.*[2]	For whosoever shall be ashamed of me *and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation,* the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, *when he cometh in* *the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.* And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God *come with power.*	For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh *in* *his own glory,* and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels. But I tell you of a truth, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.	For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; (*and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds*).[4] Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the *Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

[1] In Luke, "shall the Son of man." [2] In Luke, "before the angels of God." [3] In Luke, "shall be denied." [4] This editorial comment is a quotation from Psalm 62 : 12, or Proverbs 24 : 12.

Marcan version only this negative part of the saying is retained—" whosoever shall be ashamed," etc., while in Matthew the remainder of the ethical part disappears, the apocalyptic element is further elaborated, and a characteristically minacious clause has drifted into the middle of the passage.

Thus, when we are able, as in this case, to trace the development of a passage, we find that apocalyptic ideas of a speedy and supernatural return unconsciously grew round the sayings of Jesus ; not by deliberate interpolation, but first by the elaboration of sayings in teaching and then by small changes in editing or in copying. What our Lord meant by the Kingdom of Heaven he made clear in the parables and in his discourses, and to us the spiritual meaning of the great phrase is unmistakable ; but it was not so to his immediate followers ; and we are told that even his close disciples—and even at the last—could not clear their minds from the apocalyptic ideas in which they had been brought up—" Lord, dost thou at this time," we read in Acts (1 : 6), " restore the kingdom to Israel ? "

Although the bearing of this upon eternal punishment is indirect, it does bear upon it ; and it is well to make the point clear, and to show that it was not Jesus who was the victim of a mistake about the whole purpose of his message, but his followers. And, as we have said, the remarkable thing about the Synoptic Gospels is not that there is so much about the Last Day but that there is so little : the writers have preserved the teaching of Jesus with devout care, and only here and there have they coloured a saying with the conventional ideas of their age.

IV. Christ's Teaching of a Gradual Kingdom

1. *The Disciples' Belief in an Imminent Return*

If we study the evidence, making due allowance for the additions in Matthew, we shall find, I think, that our Lord used the current metaphorical language—for no other language would have been intelligible—but with reserve, and that he gave it a new interpretation by making it bear a gradual as well as a spiritual meaning; and that when the Fourth Gospel explains 'the judgment' as a process, it is not giving a new sense to our Lord's words, but is vindicating their original intention against the misinterpretation by the Jerusalem tradition and kindred schools.

St. Mark reveals in the course of his Gospel that there was a change in the mind of Jesus during the last stage of his ministry; and this revelation has a high historical value because St. Mark is himself unconscious of it. We can see clearly that, as the first success of the ministry gave way to a growing opposition, the mind of Jesus faced the probability of failure: after the confession at Cæsarea Philippi, he begins to teach his disciples definitely that suffering, rejection, and death are to be his lot, and that they are to share it (Mk. 8 : 27 ff.). He now conceives of his messiahship in terms of a triumph after death. He sees three stages before him: First, the inevitable conflict in Jerusalem to which they are now going, and his death. Secondly, a brief interval, symbolised in the "three days," probably taken from Hosea 6 : 1, "Let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; . . . After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and

we shall live before him." Thirdly, a return in power, an ultimate victory over evil and his enemies. But on the nature or time of that return there is, in the certain sayings of Jesus, a great reticence; and it is not to be wondered at that this reticence is expanded by metaphorical language in the Little Apocalypse and in Matthew. In no other way could people have then understood it; just as a child thinks of heaven as a place 'beyond the bright blue sky,' the explanation of a time-space conception in the terms of Einstein being beyond his nascent intelligence.

In the certain sayings of Jesus, then, we can find very little as to the manner of his coming again. Can we be sure even of the answer in Mark (14 : 62) to the High Priest, "Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven"? The words would have been reported by those who were at that time his enemies; and, though we need not go so far as Loisy, who denies that we can know anything at all about what was then said—for the record of the trials as a whole has the stamp of authenticity, and there may well have been present those who afterwards became his followers—yet their phrasing would be imperfectly remembered, and would naturally come down in a startling form. Further, it has been shown[1] that in this case St. Luke deliberately amends the Marcan tradition by his own. The night trial before the Sanhedrin described by Mark was impossible; and Luke and John must be right in describing no trial at all, in any formal sense, but only a preliminary

[1] By H. Danby, *Journal of Theological Studies*, xxi, 51–75. The matter is well summed up by Dr. Vernon Bartlet, *Mark*, pp. 402–3. See also Dr. A. H. McNeile's *Matthew*, p. 397.

examination in the house of Annas. Thus, even if we accept one of the versions of the saying as a verbatim report, we are bound to prefer that of St. Luke ; and in this version the mention of an advent disappears :—

Luke 22 : 69	*Mark* 14 : 62	*Matthew* 26 : 64
But from henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of the power of God.	Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, *and coming with the clouds of heaven.*	Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming *on* the clouds of heaven.

It seems then that, here as elsewhere, the nearer we get to authenticity the further we get from apocalyptic.

Perhaps the most apocalyptic of the authentic sayings of the Saviour is the passage, probably from Q, on Readiness for Christ's Coming (Lk. 12 : 39–44= Mt. 24 : 43–51) ; but it is spiritual and not mechanical, it has none of the imagery of apocalyptic, and the heralding portents are absent.[1] He certainly foretells the coming again of the Messiah, and stresses its unexpectedness : " Be ye also ready : for in an hour when ye think not the Son of man cometh." But he foretells also a long delay, allowing for a process of development. The faithful servant goes on doing his duty ; but the evil servant says, " My lord delayeth his coming," and beats the slaves and lives dissolutely. So far from encouraging the disciples' expectation of an immediate parousia, the passage seems to be a deliberate warning against the idea. It is not a world startled by the appearance of trumpeting angels at the great assize that is suggested here, but rather a quiet coming of the Christ—perhaps only to the

[1] See p. 244, and cf. p. 155.

individual—and the need therefore of being ready, "and if," says the preceding passage in the Lucan version, "he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

It is sometimes said[1] that, although the Little Apocalypse of Mark 13 and its derivatives in Matthew and Luke are interpolations, yet there is another apocalypse elsewhere in St. Luke—indeed that there are two passages which show that Jesus did all the same teach an immediate cataclysm. One of these is Lk. 12 : 39, the Good and Evil Servants, which we have just described as the reverse of cataclysmic. Let us now consider the other (Lk. 17 : 22–7), which is sometimes called '*The Apocalypse of Q.*' So far as it is from Q,[2] it is one of the few passages in that most early of our sources in which the tendency to introduce apocalyptic colouring is already showing itself. But how far is it an 'Apocalypse of Q'? It seems to be a collection of eschatological sayings from different quarters strung together by St. Luke. Verses 24, 26, 27, and 30 must be from Q, and probably verses 28–9; but we cannot be so sure of verses 22, 25, and 32, for they are in Luke alone, and may be editorial comments; while verses 23 and 31–2 are taken from the Little Apocalypse of Mark 13, and verse 33 from Mark also.[3] Let us print this 'Apocalypse of Q,' leaving in roman type the

[1] E.g. (to take a recent example) by Prof. T. H. Robinson, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1928, p. 203.

[2] Matthew uses the same Q source, but incorporates it in his version of the Little Apocalypse (cap. 24).

[3] Verse 33, "Whosoever shall seek to gain," etc., is twice transcribed from Mark 8 : 35 by Matthew and Luke, and thus occurs in slightly differing forms in Mt. 10 : 39; 16 : 25 and in Lk. 9 : 24; and here in 17 : 33.

passages which are also in Matthew and therefore must be from Q: but using *italic* for those parts of which we cannot be so assured, because they are in *Luke only*, and using SMALL CAPITALS for the verses that are taken from MARK.

[22] *And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.* [23] AND THEY SHALL SAY TO YOU, LO, THERE! LO, HERE! *go* NOT *away, nor follow after them:* [24] for as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day. [25] *But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation.* [26] And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. [27] They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage. until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. [28] *Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;* [29] *but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all:* [30] after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is *revealed.* [31] IN THAT DAY, HE WHICH SHALL BE ON THE HOUSETOP, AND HIS GOODS IN THE HOUSE, LET HIM NOT GO DOWN TO TAKE THEM AWAY: AND LET HIM THAT IS IN THE FIELD LIKEWISE NOT RETURN BACK. [32] *Remember Lot's wife.* [33] WHOSOEVER SHALL SEEK TO GAIN HIS LIFE SHALL LOSE IT: BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL LOSE HIS LIFE SHALL PRESERVE IT. [34] I say unto you, In that night there shall be two men on one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. [35] There shall be two women grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. [37] *And they answering say unto him, Where,*

Lord? And he said unto them, Where the body is, thither will the eagles also be gathered together.

It is clear from this analysis that there is nothing in the 'Apocalypse of Q' upon which to build a charge of that Jesus Christ was mistaken. Although eschatology is concentrated in this special collection of passages, the language is vague—" the days of the Son of man," " so shall the Son of man be [in his day] " (these three words are absent from some of the best manuscripts), and " the day that the Son of man is revealed." The last word, 'revealed,' is peculiar to Luke (Matthew having " the *coming* of the Son of man "): if it is the original word, it is important, because it indicates that the Son of man is already present invisibly, and that the parousia is the manifestation of this unseen presence: if it is a change made by Luke, it still suggests that Luke took the idea of Christ coming in the clouds in a figurative sense. The Q verse, 24, further describes—not a coming in the clouds with attendant trumpeters but a momentary disclosure like a flash of lightning across the sky.

There is then nothing here to indicate that our Lord prophesied an imminent catastrophe, end of the world, or day of judgment. The passage is not a connected whole, being taken from different sources: the Q part (which probably includes verses 28–9), since Matthew may have omitted it as dispensable) seems to refer to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem; as does the Marcan portion: the rest was amply fulfilled at the Resurrection.

That the Disciples persisted in expecting an immediate parousia, and that Jesus discouraged it, is strikingly

shown in the parable of the *Pounds* (Lk. 19 : 11). There is good reason for supposing that Luke preserves the original opening from Q, and that it is omitted by Matthew because he is, according to his custom, grouping his material together, and therefore joins his corresponding parable of the Talents on to that of the Ten Virgins. According to Luke, the parable of the Pounds was told with the special object of discouraging an immediate advent of the Kingdom :—

He added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear.

And the whole parable bears this out ; the nobleman went into a ' far country ' where he had to receive a kingdom before he returned ; the servants were to ' occupy till I come ' : and Matthew, although his version omits the ' far country,' definitely says that it was ' after a long time ' that the master returned.[1]

Many think that the strongest argument for the supposition that Christ taught the disciples to expect his personal return during their lifetime is the fact that the New Testament writers expected it. St. Paul, it is true, increasingly modified the idea ; but the very fact that it is so marked in his earliest epistles, those to the Thessalonians, suggests that the expectation is part of the primitive deposit. John the Evangelist does indeed interpret the parousia spiritually, and applies it to the coming of the Paraclete to the individual soul, " I will not leave you desolate : I

[1] Matthew seems to conflate a source of his own (' M ') with Q, while Luke uses the Q form alone, with the addition of the ' ambassage ' verses (p. 246). B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, Macmillan, 1924, 282.

come unto you. Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more ; but ye behold me : because I live, ye shall live also " (14 : 18). But this evangelist wrote when almost all the original disciples must have passed away. As for the rest of the New Testament, it is not an exaggeration to say that all the writers look forward to a personal second coming in their own lifetime.

Against this argument however it may be urged that the first disciples failed to understand the Master's teaching, and were in fact incapable of understanding it. The Synoptists tell us more than once that this was the case during his ministry ; even when he had foretold the approaching disaster, we find James and John clamouring to be viziers in the Kingdom (Mk. 10 : 35). They could not rise to the spiritual import of his language, since their imaginations were bounded by Jewish apocalyptic. The sayings wherein he spoke of the gradualness of the process were meaningless to them. Could he have explained his vision of the future in any language that they would not have misunderstood ? It was only John the Evangelist in a later age who could consistently expound it as the progressive working of the Spirit who would lead them into all the truth.

All the four Gospels indeed make us feel that the whole life of Jesus was one long misunderstanding, even at the hands of those who loved him best. It is not St. John only who tells us that " they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them " (10 : 6) ; that " these things understood not his disciples at the first " (12 : 16) ; but St. Luke says that the first words he uttered were not grasped by his

parents—" they understood not the saying which he spake unto them " (2 : 50), and that his first speech showed that " no prophet is acceptable in his own country " (4 : 24–30). St. Mark tells us that his friends said, " He is beside himself " (3 : 21) ; that he complained to his disciples after saying that a man is defiled by what goes out of him, " Are ye so without understanding also ? " (7 : 18) ; and again, after their naïve literalism, when he had warned them against the leaven of the Pharisees, " do ye not yet perceive, neither understand ? have ye your heart hardened ? Having eyes, see ye not ? and having ears, hear ye not ? and do ye not remember ? . . . Do ye not yet understand ? " When he foretold his death and ultimate triumph, " they understood not the saying, and were afraid to ask him " (Mk. 9 : 32). There are other examples : the failure of the disciples at the very end, according to St. Luke (Acts 1 : 6) to see what he meant by establishing his kingdom, we have already mentioned : but one passage in St. Luke's Gospel (22 : 38) is so generally missed that we will mention it here. Indeed it was so misunderstood in the Middle Ages that on it was based the doctrine of the ' two swords '—the Empire and the Papacy : " And he that hath none, let him sell his cloke, and buy a sword. . . . And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough." This does not mean that two swords were enough for a fight against the whole armoury of the authorities, but in our modern colloquialism, " That's enough," or in other words, " Don't talk nonsense." Once more, they had taken his ironic words literally, in their bald simplicity of mind : and he told them not to be silly.

Our suggestion therefore is that though the first disciples did expect the immediate personal coming of Christ, they were misunderstanding him, and that this mistake deepened after he had left the earth, during that gap of twenty years between the Ascension and the earliest records we have knowledge of, namely, the first Pauline epistles and the sources we know as Q, Mark, M, and L. In another connection, Dr. Coulton has drawn a luminous comparison between the records of our Lord and those of St. Francis of Assisi,[1] and has shown how such a gap may cover serious deflections. We know St. Francis with singular intimacy and exactness, there is no doubt about his character and teaching ; yet, within a very few years, principles the opposite to his were taught in his name ; and the majority, while claiming to speak for him, " violated his principles so deliberately and consistently that such violation became almost a test of orthodoxy." The disciples of Christ were men whose minds were wholesome and straightforward ; they preserved the teaching of their Master with remarkable fidelity ; yet it would be strange if the misunderstanding of the parousia, which they showed to the very last, had not coloured their first interpretation of this difficult subject. There may never have been very much of it in what they taught ; but there was certainly enough to produce the at first universal belief in an imminent personal second coming. And I suggest that this belief was not due to the teaching of Christ.

And there were strong reasons for a reversion to the

[1] In his contribution to F. J. F. Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, 1922, ii, pp. 438 ff.

inherited apocalyptic atmosphere and for the deflection of Christ's teaching when the disciples had him no longer at hand to rebuke and correct. Students have till recently been prone to ignore these twenty years that intervened between the Ascension, *c.* 29, and the appearance of Q and of the earliest Pauline epistles, *c.* 50. In the case of St. Francis a similar period concealed an actual *volte-face*. In that of our Lord some misunderstanding was surely inevitable. The disciples had expected a great and immediate success; they found themselves in a world without him, where he was either forgotten or despised as a crucified malefactor; yet they were assured of his continued presence in the Spirit, and knew that his work was going forward: "They could not express, even to themselves, the spiritual power which had transcended death except by giving him a place in the popularly accepted drama of the end of the world and the day of judgment"[1]: and whatever they said under this imagery would almost inevitably be exaggerated at once on popular lines. He would be proclaimed as a divine Judge who was coming shortly to vindicate the despised community, and to give everlasting glory to those who accepted him, and shame and destruction, such as Enoch had foretold, to those who had denied him to be the Messiah.

2. *Did Jesus foretell a Day of Judgment?*

There must be the element of judgment—the separation of good from evil—in any realisation of the Kingdom of Heaven: but the definite interpretation

[1] L. Dougall and C. Emmet, *The Lord of Thought*, Student Christian Movement, 1922, p. 123.

of the Kingdom in the terms of a judgment day is peculiar to Matthew; and even his language is metaphorical and vague, expressing in dramatic form the great truth that men are saved by their works of service, and lost by their lack of goodwill.

There seems to be no authentic evidence that Jesus ever spoke of himself as the actual judge; for none of the supposed instances will bear a close investigation. They are :—

"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me," etc. (Mt. 7 : 23). In Luke it is the master of the house who says this (see p. 252), and the whole passage is allegorical.

"And then shall he render," etc. (Mt. 16 : 27). This is tabulated on page 200 : the sentence is an editorial comment, quoted from Psalm 62 : 12, or from Proverbs 24 : 12, where it also occurs.

The explanation of the parable of the Tares (13 : 41). This is also editorial. See pages 239–40.

The Sheep and the Goats (25 : 31). The reasons for not accepting the phraseology of this for a description by Christ or of a judgment day, or of himself as judge, are given on pages 233–5.

The parables of the Wedding Garment and the Talents (Mt. 22 : 13 and 25 : 14), which are described on pages 241 and 245, speak of judgment upon wrongdoing, but do not describe a judgment day or speak of Christ as judge. The same may be said of the allegory of the evil servant, which is explained on page 244.

There is however one striking phrase which speaks of the Apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It is not Christ as judge who is thus described, nor

any 'day of judgment,' but a kingdom on the earth in which the Apostles are to administer justice as the King's ministers. If this promise was made by Jesus, we can only say that it was not fulfilled. Is it then a saying of Jesus? Those who think he could not make a mistake will say that it was not, and those who think that he was misled into accepting literally the current apocalyptic ideas will say that it is a strong piece of evidence on their side; for the literary attestation is good, though not of the best. The words, "Ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" do not seem to have been taken from Q, for they are in different contexts in Matthew and Luke; they were probably derived by each from his own special source (M and L), and therefore would be a traditional saying current in early days. They are not in Mark, nor in Luke's version of the Marcan passage, but they occur elsewhere in Luke :—

Mark 10 : 29	*Luke* 18 : 29	*Matthew* 19 : 28	*Luke* 22 : 29
Verily I say unto you.	Verily I say unto you,	Verily I say unto you, *that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* And	*And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom,* and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you . . .*
There is no man that hath left house . . .	There is no man that hath left house . . .	every one that hath left houses . . .	

The two versions are so widely different that we are left in doubt as to what the original saying actually was; and those who think, as I do, that Jesus did not adopt a mistaken eschatology, have good ground for supposing that the difficulty which we acknowledge would disappear if we had the exact words. Both passages are figurative, and contain much from Enoch and others[1]: the Matthæan sentence about the Son of man looks like a gloss; and the Lucan version seems to be the nearer to the original. But would the Apostles have published abroad a saying about their sitting on thrones? Perhaps the words reflect some early controversy at Jerusalem.

In any case, neither version describes a Day of Judgment, and neither speaks of Christ as judge; but both describe merely an administrative process, apparently permanent, conducted by the Apostles.

We are then justified in concluding from all the above examples that the conception of a definite judgment day is Matthew's way of dramatising a great truth—that men are judged not by their opinions but by their deeds. On page 163 we can see in the clarity of a table how characteristic of him is this thought of a Judgment Day; but he himself varies as to whether it is the Son or the Father who is to judge.[2]

3. *Sayings alleged to be against Gradualness*

Did Jesus ever speak of the Coming of the Kingdom

[1] For examples see A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, Macmillan, 1928, pp. 281, 247, 368.
[2] See A. H. McNeile, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

as an immediate and catastrophic event? Did he lead his disciples to expect an 'end of the world'? The following passages have been alleged as proofs that he did. Let us therefore examine them now.

(1) "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 14 : 15) can be disposed of at once. The words were not said by Jesus, but by a guest at the meal. (2) "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9 : 27), Mark adds "with power." We have tabulated this passage on page 200. Here we need only add that the words are absent from the version in Q; and that, though they are apocalyptic in character, they may bear a spiritual meaning, and many have seen their fulfilment at Pentecost. (3) The next, which is certainly from Q (Lk. 13 : 28 = Mt. 8 : 11), is surely nothing more than a statement in the language of august poetry of a great truth:—"there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." There is nothing here of the violent and inevitable mechanism of Jewish apocalyptic, nothing indeed about any second coming of Jesus at all. The passage is part of an allegory in which the 'master of the house' refuses admission to those who knock. (4) In the account of the Last Supper (Mk. 14 : 25), "I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink

it new in the kingdom of God."[1] But this surely means no more than (*a*) "We are drinking now for the last time together," and (*b*) "But we shall drink a wine of another kind together in a better world than this." It does really seem that the discovery of so many Hebrew apocalyptic books has upset the judgment of some theologians. There is nothing here about an apocalyptic eruption or any second coming. A man of the present day, steeped in evolutionary science, might say it if he believed in immortality and a future life. Surely we shall never arrive at the truth while we are so unimaginative in our interpretation of One who, because his mind was of the highest type, was a poet as well as a teacher.

4. *A Gradual Consummation*

There are three ways in which our Lord pointed to what we should now call the principle of development. (1) The time of the consummation was unknown; (2) The Kingdom which was to come was already present, and therefore the coming had begun; (3) It was to spread gradually.

(1) As we have already said (pages 204 and 244), he taught that his disciples were to be always prepared because only God knew when the hour would come. There was a sense in which he would come to all of them personally during their lifetime, and the parable of the Ten Virgins inculcates the consequent need of watchfulness; but this may not be more than a

[1] There is inevitably some uncertainty about the words of administration at the Last Supper; since the four records of St. Paul, St. Mark, St. Luke, and Matthew differ so greatly that, out of some thirty words, there are only six words which are common to them all.

figurative way of warning them not to drift along and miss their opportunities. Certainly the danger is as real for us as it was for them.

It is significant that Luke, who accepts and increases the Little Apocalypse of Mark, tells us later in Acts (which is generally held to be a continuation of his Gospel) that, when the Apostles asked Jesus, "Dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" he replied (Acts 1 : 6), "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The parousia is here conceived as a coming of the Holy Spirit, and a period of wide-spread evangelisation is suggested. But, as we have already noted, the moral has been often obscured by the assumption that the two men in white apparel who stood by them after the Ascension were angels. If they were indeed, it might be pointed out that "not even the angels in heaven" knew the day or the hour ; but the text suggests that it was the comment of two contemporary Judæans that "this Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven."

(2) Our Lord most frequently spoke of the parousia as a coming of the Kingdom of God : in opposition to the worldly and political expectation of the Jews, and of his own disciples, he pointed to a fellowship in which the divine will was to be fully realised. This Kingdom Jesus constantly spoke of as already present. It was "at hand" (Mk. 1 : 15) ; the prophecy of its

good tidings "to-day" was fulfilled when he proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord (Lk. 4 : 18–21); his own powers over disorders showed that "then is the kingdom of God come upon you" (Lk. 11 : 20); he told his hearers that the least in the Kingdom was greater than John Baptist (Lk. 7 : 28), and that since John "the gospel of the kingdom is preached, and every man entereth violently into it" (Lk. 16 : 16). When the Pharisees asked "when the Kingdom of God cometh," he replied, not by referring to a future advent, but by saying, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you," or, "in your midst" (Lk. 17 : 20–1). This Kingdom they were to seek first, and all other things would be added (Mt. 6 : 33). The publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom before the priests (Mt. 21 : 31). And there are other instances.

(3) The Kingdom was to spread gradually, and therefore not to come in an apocalyptic way. Thus the disciples were to pray for it as something which, present already, was yet still on its way—could any conception be more evolutionary?—"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Mt. 6 : 10).

Three parables imply this gradualness. In that of the *Seed growing Secretly* (Mk. 4 : 26), the Kingdom is "as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how . . . first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," and at last should ripen. The parable of the *Mustard Seed* emphasises the same idea, with even

greater stress on the development from small to great (Mk. 4 : 31) ; and it is significant that this had little interest for Luke (13 : 19), who greatly reduces it in transcription, while Matthew (13 : 31) also shortens it, though less. The point which seems to us of special value in the light of modern scientific thought was just that which to them appeared of slight importance, because their expectations were catastrophic. The parable of the *Leaven* is from Q (Lk. 13 : 20 = Mt. 13 : 33) : it suggests a more subtle and hidden process, in extension as in time.

For St. John, and for St. Paul in all but his earliest writings, the coming again of Jesus began at the Resurrection, and was renewed for every Christian by the indwelling Spirit of Christ—the Holy Spirit of God. The Jewish expectation had been of an earthly kingdom, heralded by terrific portents : Jesus corrected this by proclaiming a kingdom of God, which was a heavenly thing, apart from time or space : and in the Lord's Prayer he bade his disciples pray for the advent, not of a throned Messiah in the butchery of a Great Assize, but for the coming of God's kingdom and the doing of his will upon the earth.

We are then justified in concluding that our Lord was free from those ideas of an immediate and violent second advent which his followers found it so difficult to shake off. He had to the full that confidence in the ultimate triumph of God, which is the glory of the best apocalyptic, and its permanent contribution to the world ; but he added a new idea, and one which is absent from Jewish apocalyptic—that the triumph of the divine will was conditioned by human action, and would therefore come gradually—by a narrow gate

and a straitened way, and struggling through the rapine of false prophets.

There are two views of the world which have been held, one that looks to the past and one that looks to the future. Paganism in general, and in a later period medievalism, and the current Hinduism of to-day, have dwelt upon an imagined golden age in the past: Jewish apocalyptic looked to a divine future, which, with all the limitations of a newly formulated intuition, was immeasurably truer and more wholesome. Jesus, fortunately for us, accepted this tradition—and transformed it; and, if his followers sometimes failed to correct by his wider vision the Jewish ideas which they carried with them, they have left clear and abundant proofs that he brought a reasonable and undying hope into the world.

CHAPTER V

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CASE FOR HELL

LIKE the breaking through of the sun after a lurid storm has been the change made in the Legend of Hell by the advance of New Testament scholarship. Nothing is more striking than the way in which the difficulties have disappeared which confronted the pioneers of the 'Larger Hope' in the nineteenth century: their reason told them that the doctrine of eternal punishment was no longer tenable; but they were honest, and they confessed that there were texts which were hard to explain. Indeed their desire to vindicate the complete lovingkindness of God was often held back by the conviction they shared with the rest of Christendom that some of the most implacable sayings had been uttered by the Master himself. Dr. Plumptre, for instance, after noting that "the ever-recurring assurance of the teaching of the Christ is that there is a 'great reward' for those who continue patient and persevering in well-doing; that the least act of loving-kindness shall not lose its 'reward'"; and that the labourers in the vineyard receive their appointed wage, with other examples, continues:—

On the other hand, the punishments of the future are held forth to men with a new and awful emphasis. There is the Gehenna of the fire which is not quenched, and the worm that dieth not. The æonian life had, as its counterpart, the æonian punishment. For those who are counted unworthy of the wedding feast of the great King, there is the "outer darkness, where

IX.—Christ Cursing the Lost
(*By Michelangelo*)

there is wailing and gnashing of teeth." There is a sin which hath never forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come. All that men had heard of the terrors of the Lord from the schools of Shammai or of Hillel is reiterated with a new authority. It must be admitted that the teaching of the gospel sanctions the appeal to the fear of hell, even in the form from which we often shrink as too strong and coarse for the refinements of a later age. . . . The preaching of Mendicant Friars, of Jesuit Missioners, of Anglican Revivalists, of Wesley and Whitfield, of the Salvation Army, so far as it is addressed to those who are in the same spiritual state as those who listened to our Lord, may legitimately appeal to the sanction of his authority. They cannot be altogether wrong if they speak now as he spake of old.[1]

Thus, eminent scholar though he was (and one of the revisers of the Old Testament in the eighteen-seventies), Plumptre, writing before the origins of the Gospels were understood, was forced to suggest that our Lord preached two doctrines—one when he appealed to the baser folk because " fear might be the first step to the eternal life," and another when he spoke with more truth in terms of reasonable warning—as the Victorian preachers were wont to preach to the well-to-do. For the Dean goes on to point out that Jesus also told a parable about a man not getting out of prison " till he had paid the uttermost farthing " ; and about a servant who would be beaten with " few stripes," while another is beaten with " many stripes " ; and that the " penalty " (the word is an unconscious interpolation of Plumptre's) for some cities, such as

[1] E. H. Plumptre, *The Spirits in Prison*, London, 1885, pp. 58–9.

Sodom and Gomorrah, will be more tolerable than for others.[1]

We are showing that this apparent biformity in the teaching of Jesus is due to the additions of editors and scribes. Even if the literary evidence were less convincing that it is, the presumption would be strong that, when there are two versions of a saying, the more merciful one is likely to be the nearer to the original words of the Saviour. For it was not in his nature to preach an accommodated gospel in two mutually contradictory forms ; and if we could get still nearer to his original sayings, it seems probable that we should find the element of mercy even larger than it is. For, whenever we can actually trace a change in the text, the alteration is in the direction of apocalyptic and of punishment. Editors or copyists seem to have felt that the sayings of Jesus were too mild, or else unconsciously to have sharpened them by their own convictions which they had imbibed from current popular ideas, or from " the schools of Shammai or of Hillel."

But before we take in order the examples which Plumptre thought difficult to reconcile with the Larger Hope, because of ' their new and awful emphasis,' it may be well to say a further word about the change in our views of the Bible. How was it that the exponents of what was rather timidly called the Larger Hope, brought to their conviction by moral and philosophical principles, and finding both in the Old and New Testaments many prophecies of the ultimate

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 60. His references are to Mt. 5 : 26, 18 : 34 ; Lk. 12 : 48 ; Mt. 11 : 22 ; Lk. 10 : 14 ; and he adds the saying about all sins but one being forgiven, for which see below, p. 246.

triumph of goodness, yet felt themselves confronted by an array of texts so formidable that it required all their faith to fit them into their scheme ?

It is difficult for us now to enter into the minds of our forefathers, who postulated an infallibility, static and unvaried, for the gradual growth in man's understanding of God's character as it is recorded in the Old and New Testaments. What they called by the inclusive name of Scripture, assuming it to be all equally spoken by God, is to us the progressive revelation of his inspiration through the minds of certain of his prophets.

Until as late as fifty years ago, it was the custom to argue from isolated sentences of the Bible. This had been inherited from the older writers who are called patristic. Regarding the whole Bible, Old and New Testament alike, as a homogeneous production from the mind of God, they used texts in the most puerile manner—building vast arguments upon sentences, capriciously wrested from their plain meaning, which had often no relation at all to the subject under discussion—and thereby they greatly retarded the progress of the human race. Multitudes still think of the Bible in this way (for the principle of history is still not universally established) : and this habit is continued by the custom of preaching sermons from isolated texts. The defenders of the Larger Hope in the last century were apt to use the same method as the prophets of hell, and to counter the text, " Shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone " by the text " Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." They could indeed produce pages of quotations of a universalist character from the Bible, beginning with " the words of God himself . . .

' in Abraham's seed all the kindreds of the earth shall be blessed ' " [1]—in this case perhaps with some show of reason, because the text is quoted in St. Peter's speech, Acts, 3 : 21, 25, in connection with the sentence about the " restitution of all things " though indeed this is really a Jewish eschatological phrase which does not imply universalism. Now that the spread of the historic conception has made it possible for us to understand that the world is not static, and that the Bible is a record of the progressive understanding by men of the word of God, of his nature and his eternal message, we can better appreciate the Old Testament, tracing with thankfulness the gradual rise of a belief in a life beyond the grave, and noting the absence of any such metaphysical conception as eternity, whether for good or ill.

No wonder our fathers found ' Scripture ' difficult to reconcile ! As Jukes said :—

> Its testimony appears at first sight contradictory. Not only is there on the one hand law, condemning all, while on the other hand there is the gospel, with good news for every one ; but further there are direct statements as to the results of these, which at first sight are apparently irreconcilable.[2]

" Words could not well be stronger," he continues, after enumerating the more lurid texts. " The difficulty is that all this is but one side of Scripture, which in other places seems to teach a very different doctrine." Fifty years of scholarship have resolved his difficulty.

[1] Andrew Jukes, *The Second Death and the Restitution of All Things*, Longmans, 1873, pp. 21–2. An ingenious catena of universalist texts is given by Thomas Allin, *Universalism Asserted*, E. Stock, 3rd ed., 1883, pp. 255–7.

[2] A. Jukes, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

They have shown that the Old Testament provides little either way, because the doctrine of a future life was not in those times developed; they have given us a knowledge of Jewish apocalyptic, which, as I have pointed out in Chapter IV, has restored the background of the New Testament; they have separated accretions from the teaching of Christ, showing how some of his followers obscured the good news, even his chosen disciples having misunderstood his message of the Kingdom of God, since they were human and he divine; and they have made us feel that the further misunderstanding after he had left them, by men who had not known him, was what we ought to have expected.

"Words could not be stronger," Jukes confessed. Let us then consider, first the list of instances which Plumptre felt gave "a new and awful emphasis" to the doctrine of punishment, numbering these I, II, III, and IV, and complete them by (V) those which Jukes and others felt to be difficult to explain.

I. Gehenna and Fire

1. *The 'Offences' Passage*

One of the most certain things in the Gospels is that Jesus used the Hebrew words *Ge Hinnom*; and a proof of this is that St. Mark thought it necessary to explain the term for Gentile readers by the words "the unquenchable fire," while Matthew explains it as "the æonian fire" and "the Gehenna of fire." Luke omits the passage altogether. As the original is in Mark, we need not say more about Matthew's use of it, except that he quoted it twice, once with

unimportant changes in his eighteenth chapter, and again when he interpolates a shortened form of it (5 : 29) into the Sermon on the Mount.[1]

Subsequent copyists embroidered the text into the form we have in the Authorised Version. We therefore print it on the right as the better manuscripts used by the Revisers present it ; but we take the liberty of putting in brackets what is probably Mark's translation of the word 'Gehenna' for his Gentile readers :—

Mark 9: 43–8

Revised Version	*Authorised Version*
And if thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off : it is good for thee to enter into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into Gehenna (into the unquenchable fire).	And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire *that never shall be quenched :* *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*
And if thy foot cause thee to stumble, cut it off : it is good for thee to enter into life halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into Gehenna.	And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off : it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched :* *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*
And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out : it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna ; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.	And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out : it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell *fire :* Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.
For every one shall be salted with fire.	For every one shall be salted with fire, *and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.*

[1] I am using the word 'Gehenna,' which unfortunately the Revisers kept in the margin while they left the misleading word 'hell' in the text. See for the words Chapter III. It has been well said that a revision to-day "would probably print in the margin as alternative much that is now read in the body of the text." F. Warre Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, Macmillan, 1910, pt. 2, p. 174.

We have italicised the words in the right hand column which were added by copyists in some later manuscripts. They evidently thought that more 'pepper' was needed. So did our translators, who rendered *asbeston* by "that never shall be quenched": but this word is applied by Homer in the *Iliad*, where it first occurs, to the fire which rages for a few hours in the Grecian fleet, to the gleam on Hector's helmet, to glory, to shouting; and "laughter unquenchable arose amid the blessed gods to see Hephaistos bustling through the palace."[1]

Asbestos occurs once in the Septuagint, where it is applied to unslaked lime in Genesis 11 : 3. Eusebius uses it twice, of the martyrs, Cronion and Julian, Epimachus and Alexander, who were "destroyed by unquenchable fire." The suggestion therefore that *asbestos* refers to an eternal fire is quite untenable: indeed, as Dr. Swete says, "the question of the eternity of punishment does not come into sight" in the whole passage.[2]

The more correct text does use the phrase about the undying worm once; but the probability is high that this also is an addition; for it is a familiar quotation from the concluding words of Isaiah, which would have come readily to the mind of an editor or scribe. The original is (Isa. 66 : 24), "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched"; and this passage is a very late insertion of apocalyptic character, not earlier than the third century before Christ.

[1] *Iliad*, Lang, Leaf, and Myers trans., i, 599: cf. xi, 50; xvi, 123, 267, etc.
[2] H. B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 1898, *ad loc.*

Some copyist then was so pleased with the phrase that he wrote out the quotation from Isaiah three times ; and the divine who in 1551 arranged the Bible in verses emphasised this error by printing each repetition as a separate verse. The Revised Version has therefore had to excise verses 44 and 46, because they are ' omitted by the best ancient authorities,' and the sonorous repetition of " Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched " disappears. These are not really small points. They illustrate the fact that successive editors and copyists have considered the words of our Saviour too merciful, finding it difficult to touch them without shifting them in the direction of terror. They show too how difficult it was for theologians to resist the cumulative effect of such changes, even when they were anxious to vindicate the cause of humanity, as were men like Origen and Gregory of Nyssa. A modern instance of this from one of the pioneers of the Larger Hope is significant of the crushing difficulties they underwent through such causes :—

It is one of the most solemn and terrible utterances of our Lord. The iterations and reiterations in it are simply appalling. The æonial fire of Gehenna, that doleful region of the nether-world, " where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," is brought before us again and again. No passage is more frequently cited by those who believe in what Shakespeare calls ' th' everlasting bonfire.' [1]

Yet the " iterations and reiterations " are mere copyist's embroidery ; and, cleansed from accretions, the passage is simple to understand. Our Lord uses

[1] Samuel Cox, *Salvator Mundi*, 13th ed., Kegan Paul, 1889, pp. 130–1.

figurative language, just as a modern writer might say, for instance, " As soon as Smith came into his money, he went to the devil, and his home became a hell." We are not literally to cut off our hands and feet, or tear out our eyes, nor is Gehenna literal. Nor is it literal to say that every one shall be salted with fire : salt and fire are both antiseptic, and both can sting. Christ came, the Baptist said, to baptise " with the Holy Spirit and with fire " (Mt. 3 : 11) : and Christ himself said, " I came to cast fire upon the earth," and added that he himself had to be baptised with this kind of searching fire.

These two last instances, and the proverb quoted by St. Paul, about heaping coals of fire by an act of kindness (Prov. 25 : 2 ; Rom. 12 : 20), show how figurative the word ' fire ' can be, and how it is used in a good sense :—" For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good : but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it ? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another " (Mk. 9 : 49). " I came to cast fire upon the earth ; and what will I, if it is already kindled ? But I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! " (Lk. 12 : 49). In the third clear instance, the story of Dives and Lazarus (Lk. 16), flame represents something that is painful but salutary. The other instances in the Gospels come, as we are seeing, to very little when critically examined—the ' Offences ' passage " Thou Fool," the Sheep and Goats, and the additions to the Tares and the Drag-net. Besides these there is only the verse about the fruitless tree being hewn down and cast into the fire (Mt. 7 : 19), which is absent from the corresponding

passage in Luke, a similar sentence about withered branches in John 15 : 6, and the reference to Lot's flight (Lk. 17 : 29) when fire and brimstone stand for catastrophe. Thus there are very few well authenticated instances of our Lord speaking of fire at all ; and indeed the word upon which so much was afterwards built is rare in the Gospels.[1]

2. "*Thou Fool*"

The same figurative use of the popular language about Gehenna occurs in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5 : 22) : " Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the Gehenna of fire "—probably as an antithesis to the old saying that whosoever called his brother Raca (' empty ') should be in danger of the discipline-tribunal of the synagogue. This is no more a statement of eternal punishment than it would be for you to say, " that man is walking on the brink of hell."

3. "*Fear Him*"

Much the same may be said about this saying from Q, which is a good deal altered either by Matthew or Luke :—

Matthew 10 : 28	*Luke* 12 : 4
And be not afraid of them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul;	And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear : Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into Gehenna ; yea, I say unto you, fear him.
but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.	

[1] Besides the instances in this paragraph it occurs only in the preaching of John Baptist (Mt. 3 : 10, 11, 12 ; Lk. 3 : 9, 16, 17) ; the description of the epileptic boy (Mt. 17 : 15 ; Mk. 9 : 22) ; of James and John wishing to call down fire (Lk. 9 : 54) ; and of Peter warming himself (Lk. 22 : 55).

Commentators are divided as to whether God or the devil is referred to here. If the Almighty is meant, it is the only passage from Q which represents him as punishing by his own personal action ; but as the next passage goes on to speak of God's tender care for us—"the very hairs of your head are all numbered"—it may well be the evil power that is here spoken of as having power to cast into Gehenna after he has killed.

We cannot say more, because we do not know how the saying stood in Q. If Matthew's version is the correct one, the passage would be a definite denial of eternal punishment, since it describes the work of Gehenna as annihilation. But it is generally safer to prefer St. Luke.

II. Æonian Punishment

1. *The Sheep and the Goats*

This (Mt. 25 : 31–46) was the passage most confidently relied upon by the patristic writers and by subsequent advocates of hell ; and the chief text upon which the doctrine of eternal damnation was built is : "And these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment[1] : but the righteous into life *eternal*," as the Authorised Version diversely translates *aiōnios*. It was regarded, not as a similitude, but as a description of the actual day of judgment. Yet there are few passages in the Gospels that have been more challenged by modern criticism since the study of Apocalyptic began ; for nearly every sentence can be traced to the Jewish apocalyptic books. We can indeed defend its genuine-

[1] Or "into enduring correction." See pp. 137–43.

ness, but only on the ground that a parable of Jesus is here clothed—magnificently—in the phraseology with which the Evangelist was familiar. We have only Matthew's version, and therefore have no means of checking it ; but we can see him occupied as on other occasions in colouring the words of the Master with the lurid tints which he loved. The originals have been found for most of the phrases. The ' fire prepared for the devil ' and ' æonian punishment ' are commonplaces of apocalyptic : the ' Son of man coming in his glory,' and ' sitting on the throne of his glory ' are almost verbatim from the *Book of Enoch* (45 : 3 ; 62 : 5), as is the description of the righteous as sheep, and sinners as other animals (90)—there is something gentler in Matthew's ' goats,' for an Eastern shepherd esteems his goats as much as his sheep, and indeed they look much alike. The whole picture had been already drawn in another apocalyptic book, the *Secrets of Enoch* (9) :—

> This place, O Enoch, is prepared for the righteous, who . . . give bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with clothing, and raise up the fallen, and help injured orphans.

And in the tenth chapter of this book an eternal inheritance of torment is prepared for those who " being able to satisfy the empty, made the hungering to die ; being able to clothe, stripped the naked."

The idea of the Son of man judging, and condemning to æonian torment those who have oppressed the poor is thus derived from other sources ; the *Similitudes of Enoch* is the background, and it is a mistake to extract doctrine, as Dr. Burkitt has pointed out, from the

setting which is presupposed and assumed.[1] But two features are original: (1) The wicked are not merely those who have broken the law and oppressed the poor, but those who have failed to do good when they had the opportunity; (2) Jesus identifies himself in a tender and splendid way with the outcast and poor, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

We shall avoid the danger of bias, if we accept the purely literary verdict of a conservative scholar:— "On various grounds its genuineness has been challenged. But there is no solid ground for doubting that it rests upon an authentic utterance of Jesus, though it may owe something of its present form to later editing."[2]

2. *Dives and Lazarus*

The most vivid and pointed of our Lord's parables is this (Lk. 16: 19–31) about the doom that fell upon a rich man because he was content to enjoy his wealth and to ignore the poor man at his gate. It teaches no doctrine however of eternal punishment, but describes an extreme reversal of fortune in an intermediate state:—

Our Lord is giving no fresh teaching about conditions in the other world. He simply assumes that the Jews are right in believing that there are abodes of joy and misery for souls beyond death: and that which he

[1] E. C. Burkitt, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Oxford University Press, 1914, p. 23.

[2] Professor G. H. Box, *St. Matthew*, Century Bible, 1922, *in loc.* So also a conservative of the right in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, S.P.C.K., 1928, *in loc.*, says of the last verse, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment," etc. "This verse is probably added by Matthew and recalls Dan. 12: 2."

is picturing is Hades or the intermediate state, in which both Dives and Lazarus find themselves, which is not to be identified with the ultimate world. [1]

The phrase, " He simply assumes that the Jews are right," goes perhaps too far. It would be more exact to say, " He takes the popular imagery, and from it makes a story about a rich man." We are unable to check the phraseology, because the parable occurs only in Luke. But can we say that it is too strong ? The criticism might as well be made that it is not strong enough ; and that even to-day, when neglect of the poor is far less than it was, and a new and better conscience has sprung up, the complacency of many rich and privileged people is unshaken.

It is a parable, a story cast in the form of sustained irony—not a revelation of the state of the departed ; and our Lord uses the conventional Jewish imagery.[2] The rabbinical phrase, ' Abraham's bosom,' is not literal—Lazarus is not sitting in the patriarch's lap—nor are the flames literal either. The rich man dies, and finds himself in hades ; and although this place is not an eternal ' hell,' it is a part of hades where there is ' distress.'

I use this word advisedly ; for, as is pointed out on page 236, the word *basanos* need mean no more than this ; and there is no more reason for rendering it ' torment ' than for rendering it ' trial,' ' pain,' or ' distress.' The word is used of sickness in Mt. 4 : 24 and 8 : 6, of being ' distressed in the rowing ' by the

[1] Bishop Gore, in *A New Commentary*, S.P.C.K., 1928, *in loc.*

[2] See, e.g., Dr. W. F. Adeney, *St. Luke*, Century Bible, *in loc.*, and Prof. F. C. Burkitt, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, Oxford University Press, 1914, pp. 23–5.

Revised Version in Mk. 6 : 48, and of the ship being ' distressed by the waves ' in Mt. 14 : 24. If therefore we make the best of the Greek original instead of the worst, seeing that the flame is certainly figurative and not literal, we can be content to say that Dives was in distress.

' Torment,' carried on by the Revised Version from the Authorised Version, is a curious instance of conservatism. It is the word in the Vulgate which our translation adopted : " cum esset in *tormentis* " (v. 23), and " in hunc locum *tormentorum* " (v. 28). Medieval thought was also much influenced by the Vulgate rendering of v. 22, " Mortuus est autem et dives, et sepultus est in inferno," " the rich man also died, *and was buried in hell.*"

Lazarus, on the contrary, is in that other part of hades where there is bliss. In the later apocalyptic, Gehenna and Paradise are often conceived as two regions of hades. There is a great gulf between the two places ; but this gulf is not necessarily unalterable. There is indeed much authoritative rabbinical teaching to the contrary—some said that the wicked would remain in Gehenna for twelve months, some that the place itself would ultimately pass away.[1]

Already the punishment of Dives is having a remarkably remedial effect : he who had not learnt the lesson in his mortal life is learning it now ; he thinks of his five brethren, and asks for them those spiritual advantages which he had not cared to seek when he was in this world. His eyes are opened to the real issues

[1] Farrar's large collection of instances from the Talmudic and other writings still holds good. See his *Mercy and Judgment*, Macmillan, 1894, 197-211.

of life; and hopeful signs of charity appear. The terrible reversal of fortune is having happy effects; Dives is already taken up into the severe and beneficent purpose of God.

III. Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

With the phrase about *gnashing of teeth*, which occurs only once outside Matthew, we will take the kindred expression about *the outer darkness* which occurs in Matthew alone. The former is found in Psalm 112, 10: "The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away"; there are many such sentences in apocalyptic, e.g. in Enoch, 108 : 3, "And they shall cry and make lamentation in a place that is a chaotic wilderness, and in the fire shall they turn." Revelation has something similar (16 : 10) when it speaks of those who "gnawed their tongues for pain." The outer darkness looks like a direct quotation from the apocalypse, 4 Ezra 7 : 93, where the wicked are whirled without ceasing in the outer darkness, but the word 'darkness' is common in this literature as a name for Gehenna. Let us take the instances one by one.

1. *The Celestial Banquet*

This is the instance in which 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' occurs outside Matthew, and, as we have said, the phrase here as it is given in Luke very appositely describes the rage of disappointment at exclusion from the banquet. Matthew adds the outer darkness and in his version the whole sentence has a different significance.

Luke 13 : 28

There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. . . .

And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Matthew 8 : 11

And shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven : but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth *into the outer darkness :* there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Thus, in Luke, the rejected show their emotion by weeping and gnashing of teeth ; but Matthew so turns the sentence as to make them to be cast out into a place (the outer darkness) ; and it is the place that brings, as always with him, the weeping and gnashing.

2. *The Explanation of the Tares*

The parable itself (Mt. 13 : 36–42) has been challenged in its present form by some scholars, and indeed its natural ending would seem to be " let both grow together until the harvest." The explanation has been already mentioned on page 198 ; few authorities would now deny that it is an editorial comment, added out of its order under the figure of a private colloquy.[1] It is full of the fierce imagery of Jewish apocalyptic : but we must remember that a Christian catechist in repeating a parable would naturally want to bring out the moral, and the moral which appealed to him might

[1] See, e.g., the verdict of a very cautious recent commentary—Dr. A. H. M'Neile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew,* Macmillan, 1928, p. 202,—" the style of *vv.* 37–43 is certainly stilted compared with that of the explanation of the Sower (*vv.* 18–23) ; the interpretation of the successive details is mechanical ; the apocalyptic expectations are of a popular and conventional character, and are expressed, to a large extent, in stereotyped formulas ; and the use of the title ' the Son of man ' for Jesus, first in his human life (*v.* 37), and then in his Messianic glory (*v.* 41), must be due to Christian tradition."

not always be exactly that intended by Jesus. Both the parable and its explanation are of course peculiar to Matthew, and the phrases we have italicised are characteristic of him, as we have pointed out on pages 155 and 163 :—

> And the harvest is *the end of the world* [*consummation of the age*]. . . . The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, *and shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

3. *The Addition to the Drag-net*

The objections to the comment on the Tares apply with redoubled force to this editorial addition (Mt. 13 : 49–50) ; for it is an almost verbatim repetition, added mechanically ; and it is not apposite, since in the parable the fishermen simply sat on the beach and threw the bad fish away—perhaps into the sea, and certainly not into a furnace with gnashing of teeth. We print the repetitions in italic :—

> So shall it be in *the end of the world* [*consummation of the age*] : the *angels* shall come *forth*, and sever the wicked from among the righteous, *and shall cast them into the furnace of fire : there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

All present-day commentaries point out that passages like these are editorial explanations ; but sometimes they do this in so cryptic or taken-for-granted a way that the ordinary reader may easily

miss the immense significance of the matter. For instance one recent commentary is content to say about this passage, " For Matthew's formula in 53 cf. 7 : 28," and this is rendered the more Delphic by the fact that " 7 : 28 " is a mistake. Yet in the same work Professor Goudge says in another place quite clearly, " There is one other way in which we should be upon our guard in the study of Matthew . . . he sometimes gives an eschatological turn to words which in Mark or Luke do not seem to possess it, and introduces eschatological sayings where they appear to be out of place." [1]

Similarly Professor Theodore Robinson's comment, " It is difficult not to see here an echo of the experience of the Church," might easily fail to be understood by the reader ; as might his earlier note on ' weeping and gnashing '—" ver. 42, which is almost a refrain in the eschatological language of this Gospel." [2]

4. *The Marriage Feast and the Wedding Garment*

There can be no doubt that St. Luke gives the original form of this parable ; and in this form it is a simple and coherent story of a man whose invitations were refused. In Matthew however two irrelevant features are added—the destruction of a city (there is no city in the body of the parable), and the fragment-parable of the Wedding Garment. Here are the passages :—

[1] *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture,* S.P.C.K., 1928, pp. 163, 128.
[2] *The Gospel of Matthew,* Hodder and Stoughton, 1928, pp. 124, 121.

Luke 14 : 21

And the servant came, and told his lord these things.

Then the master of the house being angry

said to his servant . . .

. . . that my house may be filled.

For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Matthew 22 : 6

And the rest *laid hold on his servants, and entreated them shamefully, and killed them.*

But the *king* was wroth; *and he sent his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.*

Then saith he to his servants . . .

. . . and the wedding was filled with guests.

But when the king came in to behold the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, *and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen.*

The first interpolation of Matthew has proved useful to scholars, because it has helped them to date the Gospel as later than Mark; for the sudden appearance of a city, and the destruction of it, are only intelligible as an attempt to point the moral that the fall of Jerusalem (which took place in A.D. 70) was a judgment on the Jews who had refused Christ's invitation and had 'entreated shamefully' the early Christian apostles and prophets.[1]

Matthew adds what is apparently a fragment of another parable—a story to show that a garment of goodness is necessary for those who would participate in the heavenly banquet. He points the moral by another insertion of his phrases about the outer darkness and the weeping and gnashing.

[1] See, e.g., B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, 1924, p. 516. The alternative, that it is a later addition, is perhaps less warranted.

But this time he adds also another sentence, which was one of the chief texts of the Calvinists and their Augustinian precursors, and was felt by the earlier defenders of a more Christian view as one of their chief difficulties,[1]—"*For many are called, but few chosen.*" This is another borrowing from apocalyptic; but it is here given a better meaning than: "There be many created, but few be saved" in the very pessimistic Apocalypse of Salathiel, which is dated by Kabisch and Box later than the fall of Jerusalem and is included in the *Apocalypse of Ezra* (4 Ezra 8 : 3, and cf. 9 : 15). It is added again, with similar inappropriateness, to the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard (Mt. 20 : 16) : but in this latter case it is absent from the best manuscripts, and is omitted from the Revised Version. It may possibly therefore be here also an insertion by a copyist, at some earlier date for which we have no evidence. In any case it fits neither the Marriage Feast nor the Wedding Garment : in the former parable the 'chosen' were many—more apparently than the others; in the latter, all were chosen but one. And besides this, the word 'chosen' really means 'elect' in the sense of 'worthy'; and the men in the Marriage Feast did not fail because they were not chosen, but because they refused to come. There are therefore three features at least in Matthew's version which do not belong to the original.[2]

[1] E.g., by Andrew Jukes, *The Second Death*, Longmans, 1873, p. 19.

[2] See, e.g., Prof. V. H. Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, Part II, 1909, p. 340; W. C. Allen, *St. Matthew* (International Critical Commentary), *in loc.*; A. H. M'Neile, *St. Matthew* (Macmillan, 1928), p. 317, where he points out that the real meaning is, "Many had received the call, but few had become 'elect' by accepting it." See below, p. 251.

5. *The Good and Evil Servants*

The inappropriateness of the Matthæan interpolation has been mentioned on page 155. Here we need only note that the Lucan verses are ascribed to Q, in which case they must have been omitted by Matthew as inconsistent with his own ending,—as they certainly are, since the master of the slaves is described as inflicting a graduated and temporary punishment :—

Luke 12 : 46

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the unfaithful.

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.

Matthew 24 : 50

The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour when he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites:
there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

There seems to be some corruption in the word rightly translated "cut him asunder," which both Evangelists have copied from Q. '*Dichotomesai*' can only mean 'shall cut him in two'; but if the slave was in two pieces, how could he retain sufficient vitality to have his portion with the unbelievers? —quite apart from his living on in the place of the gnashing of teeth, which we have already noted. It does seem therefore almost certain that the word used by Jesus must have had a different meaning,

The context would require a word with the meaning of ' denounce,' or ' drive out.'

6. *The Talents*

The problem of the relation of this parable to that of the Pounds in Luke is a difficult one : probably they are not derived from a common source ; and in this case the original would be behind the two sources used by Matthew and Luke. There was moreover a third version in the lost *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, which, Eusebius tells us, described " three servants, one who devoured his lord's substance with harlots and flute-girls, one who gained profit manifold, and one who hid his talent ; and how one was accepted, one merely blamed, and one shut up in prison."

This might well be the original, " one was cast into prison " ; for it is certain that there is an interpolation in this case in Luke as well as in Matthew. Two verses in Luke's account, the 14th and the 27th, are quite irrelevant ; and seem to be due to a catechist introducing an illustration of Archelaus, who went to Rome to receive a kingdom, as a parallel to Christ, who ascended to the heavenly kingdom and whose rejection by the Jews would lead to their destruction at his second coming. The removal of these two discordant verses makes the parable straightforward and intelligible. Matthew, on the other hand, merely describes the fate of the servant " in the eschatological language from which he seems unable to keep away." [1]

We italicise therefore in both versions, since both in this case contain additions ; and we suggest that the lost Gospel according to the Hebrews may have

[1] *A New Commentary*, S.P.C.K., 1928, *in loc.*

given the original ending, though of course this is not susceptible of proof.

Luke 19 : 14	*Matthew* 25 : 28
But his citizens hated him, and sent an ambassage after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us . . .	
Take away from him the pound,	Take ye away therefore the talent from him,
and give it unto him that hath the ten pounds.	and give it unto him that hath the ten talents.
And they said unto him, Lord, he hath the ten pounds.	
I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given ;	For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance :
but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.	but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away.
	And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness : there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.
Howbeit these mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.	

IV. The Unpardonable Sin

The idea of a sin against the Holy Ghost has caused more mental agony perhaps than any other ; and many like the poet Cowper have come to madness from such contemplations. Would it have been like Jesus, we may well ask, to make a statement at once so productive of innocent misery and so obscure in meaning ? For much of the misery was due to the vagueness of the words,—no one knew whether they might not apply to him.

But, if we investigate the texts, we find, as in other cases, that the terror is due to additions and mistranslations. Let us have the texts before us :—

Mark 3 : 28

Authorised Version	*Revised Version*
All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies . . . But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is *in danger of eternal damnation.*	All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies . . . but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is *guilty of an eternal sin.*

Much of the 'sternness' has then already disappeared in the Revision; but a still more exact translation removes more. "Never" in Hebrew thought refers to this life only, not the life to come; and the nearest rendering of "hath never forgiveness" is probably that suggested by Dr. Vernon Bartlet in his commentary on St. Mark—"Shall not be forgiven for all time, i.e. such as need be taken into account." "Guilty" is literally "involved in" or "subject to"; and "sin" in the Greek is not *hamartia* but *hamartema*, which means an act of sin. Thus we get nearer to the original if we render literally, as follows :—

Mark 3 : 29

Revised Version	*Literal Translation*
hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.	shall not be forgiven for all time, but is involved in an enduring act of sin.

Matthew's Gospel as usual intensifies the original, and in our text expands the saying with a reference to the next world. The refusal of forgiveness is doubled—perhaps v. 31 is taken from Mark and the repetition in v. 32 is derived from Q. If v. 32 is also dependent on Mark, then the phrase about the world to come is an attempt to explain Mark's "æonian sin"; if it is from Q, we can feel pretty sure, with Dalman and others, that it is an interpolation by an

editor or copyist. The accounts of the three synoptists differ so much that they cannot all be right: and in this case it is apparent that Matthew's account is further from any one original than those of Mark and Luke :—

Luke 12 : 10	*Matthew* 12 : 31
	Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men ; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.
And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him ; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven.	And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, *neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.*

St. Luke, it will be noticed, has little to say about the subject. If on the principle of economy we accept his minimum statement as being the least disputable, it amounts to no more than a forcible way of saying that our Lord could forgive attacks on himself, but that blasphemies against the Holy Spirit were unpardonable. But Luke does not give us the context.

This is supplied by St. Mark, and the context explains why the language is strong. The Pharisees, seeing Jesus healing the sick, had made the odious accusation that he cast out dæmons by the power of the Prince of the dæmons, that all his works of mercy were accomplished by satanic agency. Jesus meets the charge with great restraint, and stoops to argue with them, asking how Satan could cast out Satan, and pointing out that a house divided against itself could not stand. But this miserable outburst

of clerical jealousy and hatred against an unauthorised teacher called for something further. They were sinning against the light, they were making good evil in order that their evil might seem good; and so he goes on, not for the only time, to point out that open sinners, publicans, and harlots, were nearer to the Kingdom than these intolerant pietists: in a great outburst of mercy—such as most moralists would have avoided as dangerous—he declared that every kind of sin and blasphemy would be forgiven; but that there was one kind of blasphemy which was unpardonable,—the spiritual wickedness of those who saw good works done, and, because they were done by one whom they regarded as outside their caste, attributed it to the devil. Were our Lord's words too strong? They were not strong enough (and no words could have been strong enough) to prevent countless Christian ministers adopting in after ages the position of the Pharisees. And if the added words in St. Mark are part of the original record, they surely are also justified by the occasion. There are some forms of wickedness, quiet, professional, and respectable, which "involve an enduring" process of gradually increasing insensitiveness to good; and the process hardens the heart beyond the power of recovery in this life—in this 'age' of the soul's career, because it is indeed a sin against the very spirit of goodness—and of truth—which is the Holy Spirit of God.

The terror then which this saying about the unpardonable sin inspired was due to the fixed mistake of regarding Matthew as the primary authority. It is a passage the original form of which must be uncertain, because it is differently recorded in each of

the three Gospels, and was made to include eternal punishment by the Matthæan addition of "neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." It was probably no more than a statement that sin against the Spirit is a very awful form of evil: the statement was then sharpened in one or more of the records, and in our English Authorised Version was made to introduce the idea (though only as a 'danger') of eternal damnation.

V. Remaining Points

Before we clear up a few remaining arguments of the *advocatus diaboli*, it may be worth while to summarise them, together with a very careful collection of the whole case for hell, in the words of one who wrote in the pre-scientific atmosphere.[1] To make this convenient summary more useful, we have inserted page-references to the subjects we have already discussed: and we have put admitted interpolations in square brackets, Johannine references in ordinary single brackets, and mistranslations in double brackets. The passages not already discussed are in italic.

Our Lord calls his flock "*a little flock*," and states distinctly that "*many are called, but few are chosen*"; that "*strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*"; that "*many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able*"; that while ("*he that believeth on the Son hath ((everlasting)) life, he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*"); that ["the wicked shall go away into ((everlasting)) punishment,"] ["prepared for the devil and his

[1] Andrew Jukes, *The Second Death*, Longmans, 1873, p. 19.

angels"]; *page* 233, ("*the resurrection of* ((*damnation*))") *page* 132; ((" the damnation of hell")), *page* 132 [" where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"] *page* 229; that though " every word against the Son of Man [may] be forgiven, the sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven, [neither in this world, nor in that which is to come]" *page* 248; and that of one at least it is true, that "*good had it been for that man if he had not been born.*"

Let us now consider those points in the above list which have not been mentioned elsewhere in this book.

1. '*Little Flock*'

" Fear not, little flock" (Lk. 12 : 32). This only states the plain fact that, though crowds gathered round the Lord, the faithful disciples were but few in number.

2. '*Few Chosen*'

" Many be called, but few chosen" (Mt. 22 : 14). This has been explained on p. 243 as a modified quotation from Jewish Apocalyptic. It means merely that many Jews had received the call, but only a few had responded; for the word translated ' are chosen ' meant in current Jewish use simply ' are righteous,' as Dr. M'Neile points out in the work quoted on p. 243.

In Mt. 20 : 16 the sentence is absent from the best manuscripts, and is therefore omitted in the Revised Version.

3. *The Narrow* '*Gate*'

" Strive to enter in by the narrow door" (Lk. 13 : 23 =Mt. 7 : 13). This passage from Q is thus differently rendered by St. Luke, who makes it more intelligible

by giving the occasion on which it was said. A man asked Jesus whether there are few that be saved: this does not mean 'saved from hell'; for salvation in the New Testament means deliverance from evil, and Jesus uses it of deliverance from both bodily and spiritual evil, from disease and from sin.[1] Furthermore, the Greek verb is a present participle, "are being saved": the question therefore had nothing to do with the idea of future punishment, but was simply, "Are they few that are being delivered?" As was usual with him, Jesus refuses to give a categorical answer to a leading question.

Luke 13 : 23

And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. . . . [*See p.* 239.]

Matthew 7 : 13

Enter ye in by the narrow *gate:*

for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many they be that enter in thereby. *For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life,* and few be they that find it.

We have no quite certain means of proving that the lines here peculiar to Matthew are additions of

[1] See, e.g., the article "Salvation," in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, T. and T. Clark, 1902.

his to the common original in Q ; but they evince his usual desire to make the words of Jesus seem terrifying ; and also his habitual method of doing this by the use of language borrowed from Hebrew apocalyptic. The simile of the two ways, the broad leading to Gehenna, is common in Jewish thought of the period, and the words ' life ' and ' destruction,' absent from Luke, are familiar eschatological expressions. Both versions cannot be right ; for the image is changed : in Luke it is that of a door into a house, but in Matthew it is that of a gate leading to a way, and room is thus found for the idea of the broad and narrow way of Hebrew apocalyptic.

In neither version is there anything about eternal punishment. In Luke the warning is that effort is needed to attain deliverance, or rather to enter the Kingdom of God—for this is the subject of Luke's allegory of the master of the house and the banquet (which we have mentioned in another connection on page 241)—and the warning is uncompromisingly severe ; but in Matthew quite another turn is given to the saying.

4. *The Fate of Judas*

" Woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed ! good were it for that man if he had not been born " (Mk. 14 : 21). This natural exclamation of sorrow and pity—it is not a malediction—is omitted by Luke, and is transcribed by Matthew in exactly the same Greek words as in Mark. The curious thing is that the literal meaning of the Greek is " good were it for him if that man had not been born," as is stated in the margin of the Revised Version ; and

thus the literal meaning given by the Greek words *autos* and *ekeinos* is that it would be good for him (the Son of man) if that man (Judas) had not been born. Thus, although modern commentators do not as a rule prefer this interpretation, there is a real element of doubt about the meaning. In any case, there is no pronouncing of an eternal doom upon Judas, but an exclamation in a current phrase (it is found in Enoch 38 : 2) about the terrible culmination of Judas' career ; paralleled by the saying (Mk. 9 : 42), " Whosoever shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it were better for him if a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

5. *The Texts from St. John*

One of these, the "*resurrection of judgement*" (5 : 29), we have mentioned on page 132 as a probable interpolation of a copyist : the other, " the wrath of God abideth on him " (3 : 36), is not attributed in the Gospel to Jesus at all. We have printed them both in brackets on page 250, because all scholars are agreed that St. John's words are not a verbatim report of the sayings of our Lord, but an ' inspired meditation,' revealing indeed the message of Jesus with peculiar depth and insight, but (as we have pointed out on page 160) in the writer's own phraseology.

The words then, "*the wrath of God abideth on him*," are a comment of the writer on the words, not of our Lord, but of St. John Baptist ; and they are part of the universalist declaration in the preceding verse that the Father has given all things into the hands of the Son. But we must say here a word about the phrase ' the

wrath of God' ; for it has often been used to suggest the idea of damnation, and the text 'the wrath of God abideth on him,' was once wielded a good deal by the advocates of hell.

6. *Wrath*

'Wrath' is a frequent word in the Old Testament, though it is even there constantly tempered with 'mercy' ; and this makes it all the more significant that the word was never, so far as we know, used by Jesus.[1] It belongs indeed to the old dispensation ; and it has no place in the conception of God which our Lord gave to the world. Anger and wrath are intelligible in a Sultan, and not unknown in less despotic monarchs, but they cannot be applied in any natural sense to a Being who is omnipotent, all-wise, and entirely good : indeed when theologians of the present day use these words, they give them such unreal meanings that it would be simpler to drop them altogether. It was natural for early Christian writers, with minds accustomed to Jewish phraseology, to use sometimes, as St. Paul and the author of Revelation do, a word whose meaning they were already changing : their doing so makes the absence of the word from the sayings of Jesus the more significant ; and we may be fairly sure that a writer like Matthew would not have omitted it if it had been in his sources.

Indeed we are never told in the New Testament at all that God is angry. Even in the Apocalypse, the

[1] 'Wrath' only occurs thrice in the Gospels : here (Jn. 3 : 36) ; once, when it is again used by the Baptist, in the ironical question, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come ?" (Mt. 3 : 7 = Lk. 3 : 7) ; and once in the apocalyptic insertion "distress upon the land, and wrath unto this people" (Lk. 21 : 23), where it is an editorial comment.

phrase, " the wrath of God," or " of the Lamb," is used in a curious impersonal way, suggesting a process rather than an emotion ; and so also in St. Paul's writings, where the old Jewish phrase has this new impersonal sense—" The wrath [or ' a wrath '] of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness." In the editorial comment quoted above, " the wrath of God abideth on him," the phrase " describes the general relation in which man as a sinner stands towards the justice of God," says Westcott, and compares the similar use in the Epistle to the Ephesians (2 : 3).[1]

Thus do the old arguments for hell drop away one by one as we examine them in the light of scientific New Testament criticism. The object of scholars in this field has been to get back as closely as is possible to the actual words of Christ, putting aside all personal desires and prejudices, and to accept honourably whatever results may come out of the investigation. They did not foresee at the dawn of the scientific era that one outstanding result would be the elimination of the Legend of Hell ; and the world has not yet grasped the exceeding great value of their reward.

[1] B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John*, Murray, 1882, p. 63.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST

I. The Synoptic Gospels

THE ancients were extraordinarily callous in their ideas of vengeance. For all its beauty, Greek mythology is stained through and through with deeds of horrid cruelty, such as the flaying of Marsyas, the massacre of Niobe's children by Apollo and Artemis, the strangling of Laocoön and his sons by the serpents of Apollo or Athenè, and the hideous story of Œdipus. The Hebrew apocalyptists at their worst are not more fierce than their neighbours of east or west ; but they too held the ideas of ruthless vengeance, and they thought that virtue could be secured by threats and terrors ; for no other way had revealed itself to the ancient world.

1. *The Overcoming of Evil*

It at once leaps to the eye that the teaching of Jesus was profoundly original. He taught a new principle —that evil is to be overcome, not by threats and penalties, but by good ; he proclaimed God as the Father, of whom indeed, it can be said in sober truth, " pardonner c'est son métier." He was himself that very Gospel of incarnate love which he preached. He came, not to exercise domination or to be a judge, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. He spoke of God's infinite care, even for birds and flowers and for our mundane welfare, and of his tireless search for those who are spiritually lost.

Now the passages about vindictive punishment which have crept into the Synoptic Gospels are inconsistent with this. Is it conceivable that they also come from Jesus? We know now that in the first instance they did not come from him, but from Jewish apocalyptic. We know also from the patient labours of literary criticism that they are interpolations; and we can well understand how some of those who recorded his words dropped here and there into the familiar phraseology of their age; for all men, and Orientals especially, often use the language of hyperbole without following out its implications; and, after long years of oppression, fierce words came easily to Jewish lips.

Later ages gradually built up a consistent doctrine of hell out of these Jewish apocalyptic phrases, to which were added texts from the Old Testament that had nothing to do with the future life at all. If our Lord had taught such a doctrine—if he had taught that God's love of the world would so fail, and his power would so fail, that evil and misery would persist unsubdued in an endless eternity, while the vast majority of mankind writhed and blasphemed in stark agony for ever and ever, victims to the angry will of a frustrated Divinity—if he had taught anything like this, his 'good news' would have been a mass of unresolved contradictions, he would have been a false prophet incoherently mixed with a true one, and the God he proclaimed would have been a false god.

What then did Christ himself actually teach about the results of wrong-doing and obduracy? He is entirely free from the 'sin obsession,' the idea of sin as a vast ocean of guilt, which excites the anger of God and requires an infinite and bloody sacrifice in

order to propitiate an outraged Monarch of the skies [1]; but he is free also from all easy-going acquiescence in wrong, and he constantly bids us face the gravity of the issue. The world he saw was the world as it is, an austere world of sowing and reaping, in which men make deliberate and often disastrous choices. He describes two definite classes, the wheat and the tares, the saved and the lost, the wise and the foolish; and, though he refuses to answer the question, "Are there many that are being saved?" he stresses the fact that many fail to enter the Kingdom. His authentic utterances do not shrink from the metaphor of the popular Gehenna to describe the dangers which men may incur; he characterises the sin of the Pharisees against the Holy Spirit as unpardonable—to put that saying in its milder form; and those who misused their talents in the parable lost even what they had. His authentic utterances do not indeed disclose an endless doom or suggest any brutality of punishment, but they are grave enough: they suggest a heavy loss, the exclusion from that happy fellowship which is symbolised by the Celestial Banquet, and the Wedding Feast. The Foolish Virgins similarly suffered from exclusion; though there is no suggestion that they will never have another chance of going to a wedding—if it be only their own!—and the real ending of the parable is probably at the words, "and the door was shut." [2]

[1] I have explained this in *The Sin Obsession*, Benn, "Affirmations," 1928. How little there is to be said on the other side can be seen in Bishop Gore's summary of the traditional teaching about sin in *A New Commentary*, S.P.C.K., 1928, p. 292.

[2] "The Lord probably ended the parable, with dramatic skill, at this point." A. H. M'Neile, *St. Matthew*, Macmillan, 1928, p. 363.

But there is nothing of vindictive punishment about all this. Indeed the word ' punishment ' is never used by Christ. Only, the guests who prayed to be excused missed the joy of the feast ; the son who said, ' I go, Sir,' and went not, missed the happiness of service ; and those who reject the Gospel do not enjoy that which they have despised.

Matthew indeed has preserved a saying which cuts at the very root of that ancient and persistent idea of vindictive punishment :—

Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil (Mt. 5 : 38).

And St. Luke runs parallel with Matthew in the verses that follow, " To him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other " (Lk. 6 : 29) ; and both versions proceed to give the reason : vengeance is wrong, and all punishment for punishment's sake is wrong, because it is unlike God. It is just because we have to be as " sons of the Most High " that we are to return good for evil. There is no vengeance with God, as the old Hebrew writers had believed : he does not repay, eye for eye and tooth for tooth. We are told to discard that principle, precisely because it is not the way of our Father in heaven ; and therefore the passage concludes (Lk. 6 : 36) :—

Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

The ethical teaching of our Lord may in fact be summed up in a sentence of Charles Kingsley, " As

ye have been loved, so love. As ye have been judged, so judge. As ye have been forgiven, so forgive."

Thus, when the mistranslations and interpolations which make up the case for hell are removed, the parables and sayings where these passages occur become themselves one of the chief evidences for Christ's real teaching. His most solemn warnings are not threats of eternal punishment, but are like the friendly and liberating advice of a physician, who says to a patient, "If you go on living as you are now doing, you will contract a terrible illness which will bring pain and misery upon you." And with this there is always the assurance of a great reward for those who love and do good,[1] and—even for little acts like the giving of a cup of cold water—a reward in no wise to be lost.[2]

Since every Christian knows that the Gospel of Jesus is a message of tenderness and mercy, and a revelation of God as love itself, we need do little more here than register the fact that Christ came to save and not to torment, to reveal God as a Father and not as an executioner, to herald a kingdom of heaven and not a pandemonium. The cross is not a symbol of God punishing man, but of God permitting man to punish him, so that by his infinite forbearance the heart of mankind may be changed.

The Synoptics are full of this message of mercy, Matthew like the others ; indeed even the interpolation in the passage about the sin against the Holy Ghost

[1] In Q of those who lend and who love (Lk. 6 : 35, 38 ; Mt. 5 : 43–7 almost omits the reward, at first sight). Of those who are persecuted, in Q (Lk. 6 : 23 = Mt. 5 : 12). Cf. Mt. 6 : 4, 6, 18 ; and Mt. 10 : 41.

[2] Mk. 9 : 41.

(Mt. 12 : 32) refutes the heresy of Augustine and Calvin by saying that most sins can be forgiven in the next world. We need to avoid the mistake of pressing isolated sentences, especially in the parables ; but it may not be amiss to point out that it is not possible to conceive of eternal punishment under the figure of few and many stripes (Lk. 12 : 47) ; and that Matthew himself finds room for other passages of similar import, as in the sentence about paying the uttermost farthing (5 : 26), or in his version of the Talents—" till he should pay all that was due " (18 : 34).

2. *Forgiveness*

One of the most remarkable things in the New Testament is, as I have pointed out above, that the word " sin," so frequently on the lips of his followers ever since, is almost entirely absent from the recorded sayings of Jesus, and is only suggested in connection with forgiveness, as in the saying, " There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth " (Lk. 15 : 7). On the other hand, forgiveness is stressed as the very pivot upon which turn God's dealing with men and men's dealing with one another. Men are to forgive, as they hope for forgiveness (Lk. 6 : 37 = Mt. 6 : 14) ; they are to forgive, whenever they pray " that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses " [1] (Mk. 11 : 25) ; and this forgiveness is to be constantly repeated without limit—seven times a day (the number meaning boundlessness), or seventy times seven (Lk. 17 : 4 = Mt. 18 : 22). Again in the Lord's

[1] In characteristic fashion, some copyist added a threat, " But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses," a passage which has gone into the margin of the Revised Version.

Prayer we are bidden to ask God's forgiveness on the ground that we have already forgiven others, " Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors " (Mt. 6 : 12),—even in the shortest Lucan version this clause is given, " For we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us " (Lk. 11 : 4).

Throughout the Gospels this divine forgiveness is represented as something that is always offered to those who ask it. There is no condition except the ' change of mind ' (*metanoia*) which causes us to ask forgiveness, and that we should in our turn forgive others : the idea that formal confession and absolution are an indispensable condition, or that sins can only be ' washed away ' through belief in the atoning blood of Christ, are human inventions added by men who could not understand the mercy of God.[1]

Our Saviour himself revealed this divine characteristic by his dealing with sinners, and outcasts and publicans, as in the case of Levi, Zacchæus, and the sinner woman, and by his forgiving and healing souls and bodies—forgiving them so freely that he did not wait for them to ask forgiveness, as with the paralysed man (Mk. 2 : 5), who was brought only for the sake of bodily healing.

It is an activity of ready and instant forgiveness that is always shown. Why should that activity cease towards a man merely because he has passed into another life ? What is there so frightful in committing the crime of dying that God's forgiveness should thenceforward be refused ?

[1] This remarkable fact is set out at length in the Bampton Lectures of Dr. H. Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement*, Macmillan, 1919.

3. *Rescue*

"The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19 : 10). The divine activity is shown not only as bestowing forgiveness when it is asked, but as going forth to seek those who have not asked. So also in the twin parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Silver (Lk. 15 : 3–10) :—

And he spake unto them this parable, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, *more* than over ninety and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance.

Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it ? And when she hath found it, she calleth together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

The former is given also in Matthew (18 : 12) ; though with a characteristic reduction of its comprehensiveness—"if so be that he find it," instead of "until he find it" ; while the Lost Piece of Silver is omitted by him. A hundred sheep are safe ; and, though only one of the hundred is lost, the Shepherd

cannot rest until this one also is found and the whole flock is in safety. "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." In the parable of the Lost Piece of Silver, the idea is stressed of the sense of God's loss and failure, until the soul is redeemed; and, as in the Lost Sheep, the owner cries, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost." The universalist tendency of such figures as these was felt by the mass of ordinary Christians during the first two centuries; and they showed their belief by representing Christ in the earlier frescoes of the Catacombs and elsewhere as the Good Shepherd, as well as by the unbroken optimism of their funeral inscriptions and by their pictures of Paradise on the *arcosolia*: though unfortunately they thought only of the Christian flock, and did not find room for the 'other sheep' of the Jewish and pagan world.

To us the universalist character of these two parables is the more strong because it is the *owner's* sense of loss that is their theme. The thought is of the heavenly Father labouring to prevent any single one being cast away. It is not only for the sake of the sheep, but for that of the master—and in the story of the piece of silver, for no other sake—that the lost is sought; because the divine purpose is incomplete, and God fails, so long as anyone is unredeemed.

Again we ask, What is there in that change of existence which we call dying to turn the mind of God against us, and what is there except our own inherited materialism to restrict the meaning of these parables to this phase of existence only? Is God to be conceived as losing interest in sinners when their eyes are opened by death, or as condemning himself to eternal

failure just when the great impediment to success is removed, as it was in the case of Dives? For Dives was penitent.

4. *God's Fatherhood*

The idea that God could vindictively and persistently torture his children, even for a finite period, puts him on a level below that of a specially brutal specimen of the criminal classes. Monsters have existed in the past, men who have tortured their enemies and men who have killed their own sons; but it would be difficult to find examples of tyrants who have kept their own children in prolonged and unlimited torment, or who would have continued the process eternally had they been able.

An ordinary father may be stern to the extent of real cruelty, though such conduct becomes more rare as civilisation improves; but his harshness, if he is at all intelligent, is due to a mistaken idea of remedial discipline and not to vindictiveness. Christ describes the heavenly Father as above the highest and most forbearing type of human parent, with the tenderness of a mother. He is a Father who does what men are bidden to imitate—he rewards evil with good, because only thus can evil be changed into good. So, for instance in Q (Mt. 5 : 43 = Lk. 6 : 27) :—

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy : but I say unto you, Love your enemies . . . that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love

them that love you, what reward have ye? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

It is a crucial point this. God is our Father; but what sort of a father is he like? The answer is given in many places, but most fully in the parable of the Prodigal Son "the most beautiful and precious of all the parables," which yet was thought of so little significance at first that it would have been lost, had not St. Luke preserved it in his fifteenth chapter. Now the point of the story is the lavish forgiveness of the father, not the repentance of the son, which indeed is not of a high order—for he only returned when he was broken and starving, with no other course open to him. The father might well have said, "Selfish as ever! he has only come back for what he can get!" But the story is told to show what sort of a human father the heavenly Father is like; and this father runs out to meet the humbled prodigal half-way: he cannot wait to emphasise the lesson; but, throwing dignity and discipline alike to the winds, he runs, falls on the prodigal's neck, and kisses him. No punishment occurs to his mind—not even a brief, temporal penalty—nor any reproach; but gifts are heaped on the returning one, clothes, and the extravagance of a ring; and a lavish banquet follows, and they begin to be merry, and the house rings with music and dancing. And the elder brother is angry; but even this cannot quench the high spirits of that remarkable parent. Most men would have turned upon the grumbler at such churlish interruption; but nothing can disturb the good nature of his father—"All that is mine is thine, But it was meet to make

merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive; and was lost, and is found."

Could God's joy in forgiveness be more wonderfully suggested than in this story of rollicking human merriment? and could the attitude of future theologians to the sinner have been more incisively foretold than in this picture of the respectable elder brother, indignant that the sinner has got off—with dancing instead of damnation? Christ told his disciples to reward evil with good, because that is the nature of God; and then, as the Jewish proverb said, they can heap upon the heads of evil-doers the fire, not of torment but of the kindness that brings compunction—because this is what God does, God's knowledge of psychology being unlike that of stupid, vindictive man. Men have gone on teaching in the name of Christ that God is terrible and that Christ is a 'doomsman,' inexorably vindictive; that God's wrath is upon his creatures, and that he hates—not the sinner, they have not always dared to say that, but sin—and to such an extent that he will lacerate the poor sinner unmercifully, unceasingly, world without end. But here it is all swept clean away. God is just love, quite really and truly love, like the very sweetest old father you can think of—kind to the point of foolishness, that father in the parable must have seemed—heaping upon the head of the returning sinner the fire, not of the merciless purgatory or hell which men have invented, but of kisses and love, and a lavish and hilarious entertainment.

And, we ask again, What is there in the act of dying that it should change the mind of God towards us, or frustrate his unconquerable purpose of good?

We cannot doubt the love, and we dare not doubt the power, of that eternal Father whose will most surely is that all his children shall be delivered from evil.

5. *The Actuality of Jesus*

Herein, I think is the reason why there is not more in the authentic recorded sayings of Jesus about the ultimate fate of those who are called 'the wicked.' He seems to have thought in the terms of an eternal Now, and to have made no distinction such as we are in the habit of making—and it is a mistaken habit—between this phase of existence and the next. He spoke of the Father as eternally loving and kind; he thought of men as mixed in their nature, both as good and as evil, which they are; he thought of some as rising to the call of virtue and of service, and thus becoming worthy of the joys of God, and of others as refusing, and suffering exclusion; but we are not told that he thought of any class of men as 'the wicked,' or as doomed,—or even as 'lost,' except in the real sense of having strayed and being sought for by their Shepherd. He said no word about an eternity of pain or punishment in the next world; nor did he speak either of an eternity of bliss. He was content to say that God loves us entirely.

His reticence about the conditions of the future life contrasts strongly with the abundance of detail which soon grew up, and by the Middle Ages was formulated into an elaborate system such as Dante pictured in the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. They knew all about it by then! Men have always been avid for information about the next world, and the temptation to invent has not been resisted. But

he resisted it. He seems to have said so little about a Second Coming, a Judgment, or a general Resurrection, that in the minds of some of his biographers apocalyptic phrases welled up to fill the gap; for, even if we were to accept, in defiance of the evidence, the "Little Apocalypse" of Mark 13 as by him, with the other kindred passages, it would still be true that the small amount of formulated or detailed description is in most striking contrast with the writings of contemporary Judaism. That there is a resurrection he taught very definitely, and he explained it in terms of life, saying (Mk. 12 : 27) that God is the God of the Patriarchs because "he is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

He spoke in terms of the living, and he seems habitually to have ignored death; for death is only an incident in the life of the soul, and otherwise there is no death. The Kingdom of Heaven which was the core of his message is not a home in the skies, as many used to think, but a realm of God which has already begun and is to be prayed for here on earth as in heaven. Here and now the blessed life begins, here and now the choice is made between light and darkness; but the choice is not final; the son who said, "I will not," afterwards repented and went. The process continues; and it is only our materialistic minds that can consider it to be closed by death: for through that releasing development the life of the soul continues; choice, rescue, and reform are possible as before, and surely less difficult in that clearer light than now.

I do not suggest this explanation of our Lord's silence about the future, merely because it affords

a way out of a difficulty. If there were a difficulty about the reasonableness of his teaching, it should be frankly faced; but some study of metapsychology has convinced me that scientific psychic research is proving the truth of his way of regarding the eternal life as already begun. This was not understood by all the editors of his words, some of whom added explanations from the current apocalyptic; but he clearly bade people recognise the immediate results of the choice between good and evil, and spoke of the next life only to point out that in it the inequalities of this world would be reversed for Dives and Lazarus. According to St. John, he spoke frequently of the judgment, not as a future event, but as a process which had already begun in the heart, and when Martha expressed her belief in the resurrection "at the last day," he corrected her. He did not lay down any doctrine of an 'intermediate state,' but he spoke of life continuing after death, of happiness, and of moral improvement following on discipline, in that further life.

We need to study with the greatest caution the records of psychic research, and to be not less critical than the numerous band of scientists to whom we owe that important and growing branch of knowledge; but those who have thus studied the matter would, I believe, agree in saying that the evidence goes to show that a person after death finds himself in an existence in which his character and interests continue, though some difficulties are already lessened or removed; that death is in fact no more than an event in the life of the soul, and that this life develops in the new conditions, profiting by the lessons learnt

in the terrestrial experience, when the soul has been at school. Our conclusion is that in our new development we shall see unobscured the issues between good and evil, and be moving towards those further 'mansions,' which are the stages towards the heavenly place where God is seen, face to face, and all things are reconciled and understood.

If the life of the spirit is continuous, and the shedding of matter at death but an incident in its career, the forgiveness of God, which is inexhaustible, will be accessible in the future as in the past; the Good Shepherd will continue to seek the lost sheep "until he find it." For the love of God is an eternal activity, and, like the sun, shines upon the just and the unjust alike, penetrating wherever an entrance is afforded. Thus it comes into the heart of a robber on Good Friday, because in him there is a *metanoia*, a 'change of the mind.' We speak of the Penitent Thief; but we are not told by St. Luke of anything to justify that epithet as it is usually applied; only that he rebuked the other malefactor, acknowledged the justice of their sentence, recognised the innocence of Jesus, and became receptive to the divine radiance, when in a moment of faith in the Messiahship he cried, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And there is no demand for penance, penalty, or purgation; but the answer rings out in the unchanging Now of salvation, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."

II. The Fourth Gospel

There is then in the teaching of Christ no shirking of the fact of evil. The Prodigal Son is not palliated or excused: he is only forgiven.

A clear note of instancy is characteristic of the Synoptic Gospels. The ultimate future is not discussed ; the recorders are not interested in the problem of the final destiny of evil ; their imaginations are still influenced by the conception of a restored Kingdom of Israel to be ruled by the Messiah under the blue dome of heaven with its nightly spangle of stars. In different degrees the authors and editors are acknowledged to have added such apocalyptic conceptions to the authentic sayings of Jesus. Now in oral transmission and in literary work (especially under the onerous conditions of the ancients), it is more easy to overlook than to add. Therefore it is more than probable that many sayings of Jesus which went beyond Jewish apocalyptic would often have been omitted by the early Jewish-Christian recorders : such sayings would have sometimes escaped their notice, or would have been misunderstood as we know on certain occasions they were misunderstood.[1] Was not some of this less easily grasped teaching in the sources which St. John used when he wrote the last of the Gospels ?

The message of God's complete forgiveness was indeed too deeply impressed for any record to miss it ; but the eternal implications of salvation would not take great hold of men trained from their childhood in Jewish apocalyptic. We should expect therefore not only apocalyptic phraseology but corresponding omissions also in the Christian rabbi, Matthew ; less of this tendency in the Jewish but more cosmopolitan Mark ; and less again in the Gentile, Luke. And this is exactly what we find ; indeed it is from St. Luke that most of the instances in the preceding pages are drawn.

[1] See e.g., p. 209.

But even with him the eternal issues are not much dwelt upon. The implications are there ; but they are overheard rather than heard.

1. *The Enduring Life*

In the Fourth Gospel these implications become the very core of Christ's teaching : the Kingdom of Heaven is interpreted as " the enduring life," and this life is set forth as an eternal fact in the forefront of the message of Jesus. St. John's Gospel is full of the thought of ultimate recovery, of the triumph of good through Christ, in fact of Universalism. Is he making good what was lacking in former interpreters, or is he adding something of his own to the otherwise defective teaching of Jesus ?

We are justified in saying that the teaching of the Fourth Gospel is the teaching of Jesus, though the record is given in the Greek and not in the Jewish manner—that is, the phraseology is the writer's own. This is not the place to pursue the difficult question of the sources from which John the Elder drew his material : we have assumed on page 158 that the easy course of identifying him with John the Son of Zebedee is not really open to us. Dr. Garvie's theory is very attractive—that the ' witness,' mentioned by the Redactor in the last verse but one of the Gospel, is the ' Beloved Disciple,' a young man of Jerusalem, the owner of the house where the Last Supper was held, and conversant with the ministries in Jerusalem about which the Synoptics are silent.[1] The Beloved Disciple would in any case stand in something like the same relation to

[1] A. E. Garvie, *The Beloved Disciple*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1923.

John the Elder as St. Peter stands to St. Mark. If he was a Jerusalemite, and not the Apostle John, he not only knew the more intimate thoughts of the Master, but also heard the teaching in Jerusalem, which would naturally be concerned with subjects above the understanding of Galilean peasants, in fact with matters such as are characteristic of the Fourth Gospel. We cannot base our argument indeed upon what is no more than a conjecture ; but this much is certain, that the Evangelist had first-hand knowledge of Jerusalem : that he deals with the work of his predecessors—correcting their eschatology, and setting forth a chronology which modern criticism is now inclined to prefer to that vaguely suggested by them—as one having the knowledge and authority to set forth the record in his own way ; and that in doing so he gives us the most profound and creative side of the Christian Gospel.

Moreover the characteristic thoughts of St. John's Gospel and Epistles are not altogether absent from the Synoptics : they appear in a way which suggests that these Evangelists were aware of them, but did not attach so much importance to them as did St. John. For instance, the most salient of all the characteristics of the Fourth Gospel, the substitution of ' the enduring life ' for the Kingdom of Heaven, is present in St. Mark, in that very ' Offences ' passage which we have vindicated on page 227 from the charge of inculcating eternal damnation ; for Mark says (9 : 43–7) : " it is good for thee to enter into *life* maimed . . . it is good for thee to enter into *life* halt," and " it is good for thee to enter into *the kingdom of God* with one eye." So the conception of the eternal life was not unknown to

Mark ; and even Matthew, as we have said, preserves one Universalist saying which is recorded by no one else (18 : 14)—" Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish," just as he preserves in the parable of the Leaven an idea of progressive development which must have been alien to his own apocalyptic thought.

Thus there is no contradiction between the Johannine conception of the heavenly Kingdom and that of the Synoptists. St. John uses the Synoptic phrase three times, and in each case he mentions the Kingdom as already present : " Except a man be born from above, he cannot see *the kingdom of God* " (3 : 3) ; " Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into *the kingdom of God* " (3 : 5) ; " My *kingdom* is not of this world : if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight " (18 : 36).

2. *Apocalyptic Discarded*

St. John, whom we assume to be John the Elder of Ephesus, has indeed a clearly marked style and definite characteristics of his own ; but the teaching of Jesus which he preserves represents the most precious tradition we possess, enforced by comments of the evangelist's own. He was aware that some of the Judaising Christians had coloured the words of Christ with their own exaggerated eschatology, including the desire of a persecuted people for the destruction of its enemies. He carefully corrects this tendency, avoiding all reference to the Little Apocalypse which had crept into Mark 13. He was acquainted with the Gospels of Mark and Luke ; and he substitutes for the Little

Apocalypse the Great Discourses of chapters 13–17. In these the catastrophic coming of the Messiah is replaced by the coming of the Spirit, the Paraclete, who is to lead his people into all truth[1]: it is to this that the simile of the woman in travail is transferred[2]; and the statements also that they will be hated[3] and persecuted,[4] and will be witnesses.[5] In these chapters also the thought appears of the Son being given authority over all flesh, with the power of eternal life and the prospect of a final unity.

Thus, while Matthew shows a movement in the reverse direction, Mark, Luke, and John form, as Dr. Streeter says,[6] a series with a progressive tendency to emphasise the universal element in Christianity. This is found consistently throughout the Fourth Gospel, with the exception of two interpolations, one which we have mentioned on page 132, and another where the Redactor adds in his concluding section the words (21 : 22), " If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? "

3. *Judgment as a Process*

In the Fourth Gospel the Parousia is a present and spiritual fact, and never (except in the editorial interpolations just referred to) a future event ; and the Judgment is going on now in the hearts of men, " The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear

[1] Mk. 13 : 26; cf. Jn. 14 : 26 ; 15 : 27 ; 16 : 7.
[2] Mk. 13 : 8; cf. Jn. 16 : 21.
[3] Mk. 13 : 13; cf. Jn. 15 : 18 ; 17 : 14.
[4] Mk. 13 : 9; cf. Jn. 15 : 20 ; 16 : 20.
[5] Mk. 13 : 11, cf. Jn. 15 : 27.
[6] B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, Macmillan, 1924, p. 394.

shall live" (5 : 25); or in the comment, "and this is the judgement, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil" (3 : 19); and therefore "For judgement came I into this world, that they which see not may see; and that they which see may become blind" (9 : 39). Yet Jesus does not judge: "I judge no man.[1] Yea, and if I judge, my judgement is true; for I am not alone" (8 : 16). The mission of the Son is not to judge but to save, "And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world [and the thought is both present and future as the passage continues]. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (12 : 47). Judgment is in fact a continuous process, and men work it out themselves, "He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already" (3 : 18). Sometimes judgment is spoken of in the sense of discrimination. "I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth" (8 : 50); and "As I hear, I judge: and my judgement is righteous" (5 : 30). It is never conceived as a Grand Assize.

Sin, according to St. John, is that which destroys life; and men attain to the 'enduring life' by believing: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (3 : 16).

[1] It is worth noting as characteristic of Jesus, although the case is there only a secular one, that in Luke (12 : 14) he repudiates the idea of being a judge. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?"

Christ is the Saviour of the whole world (4 : 42), the Life of the world (6 : 33, 51), the Light of the world (8 : 12), He has come for all : " I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself " (12 : 32) ; the Father has " given all things into his hand " (3 : 35) and this he knows (13 : 3) ; and prays " Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee : even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life " (17 : 1).

And this ' world ' that is to be saved is the actual world which, as St. John says in his First Epistle (5 : 19), lies in wickedness ; and if it is difficult to imagine how good and evil are to be balanced in the next life, the clue is given in the declaration that in the Father's house are many mansions (14 : 2)—one of the few occasions on which the veil is lifted of that evangelic reticence which is in such striking contrast with the lavish and lurid inventiveness of the later Church.

4. *St. John's Epistles*

The same spirit fills the three Johannine *Epistles* which were written by " The Elder," as he tells us himself in the second and third of these letters. Love, and not vengeance, is the theme, the love of a Father who first loved us, and who sent his Son to be the saviour of the world (1 Jn. 4 : 14) ; the love of men one for another, and the perfect love which casts out fear, because fear has punishment, and he that fears is not made perfect in love (4 : 18)—the exact opposite of the teaching of those who try to make men good by the fear of hell. Jesus Christ, to the writer of this

First Epistle, is sent to be the saviour of the world, the propitiation not only for our sins but for the sins of the whole world (2 : 2) ; and the devil appears, not as the gaoler of a hell to which mankind as a whole is predestined, but as a metaphor for the evil which is to be eliminated from a creation which Christ has saved—" To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil " (3 : 8).

We conclude then—and not from St. John's writings alone but from all the four Gospels—that, enormous as was the contribution of the Jewish race to religion, the supreme greatness of Jesus Christ is shown in his knowledge of God as complete forgiveness and love, in the conception which he brought of the present Kingdom as the enduring life, and also hardly less perhaps in his silence about the particulars of that future life which lies beyond the power of human imagining.

III. St. Paul : The Fifth Gospel

1. *Relation to the Four Evangelists*

St. Paul was converted during the height of the apocalyptic expectation : at first he accepted the views then current, but gradually in his later epistles discarded those views, as we have related on pages 182–4. His earliest epistles, those to the Thessalonians, were written *c.* A.D. 51 ; the latest group, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians, representing his maturer thought, appeared some five or six years before St. Mark's Gospel. They must therefore be consistent with the record of Christ's teaching prior to the date of Mark, *c.* 65. Moreover

Mark and Paul were in close contact about the year 50. Luke also was a helper of Paul, and was with him at the end, somewhere about the year 65. We may therefore safely assume that there was no difference between Paul, Mark, and Luke as to the teaching of Jesus which lay behind the writings of all three; that, if Jesus had taught the doctrine of eternal torment, St. Paul must have known that he was contradicting that teaching; and that St. Luke is not likely to have disagreed with the universalism of St. Paul's last period, when they were in close friendship together.

The personal element in St. Paul's writings is abundant and conspicuous, and his rabbinical training must be allowed for: but it is woven across a fifth Gospel; and in that sense St. Paul is the earliest evangelist, the order of the respective books [1] being —

1. Paul (*c.* 50 or 51 to *c.* 61 or 62).[2]
2. Mark (*c.* 60).
3. Luke (*c.* 80).
4. Matthew (*c.* 85).[3]
5. John (*c.* 90–5).

St. Paul was able to take the records about Jesus for granted when he wrote; but the fact that they had long been known to the Churches he addressed must have given him the opportunity of checking

[1] Q, the source embedded in Luke and Matthew (and probably reproduced nearly in full by Luke), is to be dated *c.* 50, and therefore may be slightly earlier than the earliest of St. Paul's epistles.

[2] A. H. M'Neile, *St. Paul*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1920, p. xix. Some prefer slightly earlier dates, e.g. Epistle to Galatians, 49 (W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1925, p. xiii); but C. H. Turner in *Hastings' Dictionary* (i, p. 423) inclines to 55 for this Epistle, while allowing the possibility of 50–2. Pauline passages in the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Tim. and Titus) may be *c.* 63.

[3] Some would date Matthew as late as John.

his teaching by whatever traditions, oral or written, were current. Although he claimed that the meaning of the Gospel had come to him through revelation of Jesus Christ, and that he had kept away from the Apostles for three years after his conversion, he protested that he had not departed from the original deposit (Gal. 1 : 12–18). His independence was the first step from that Jewish particularism which lay at the root of apocalyptic. At first he accepted the apocalyptic, while claiming from the outset that the Gospel was for all the world and not for Jews only ; but, as he gradually discarded it, he developed the great idea of universal salvation.

Is it an improbable suggestion that the first records of Jesus which he studied, perhaps on his journey from Damascus to Arabia, were obtained from Jerusalem or some other centre where there was a strong Jewish bias ; and that his development was afterwards helped by the study of other records which were closer to the original teaching of Jesus ? One saying of the Lord, " It is more blessed to give than to receive," which is not in the four Gospels, we owe, according to Acts 20 : 35, to St. Paul, who must have got it from some record, oral or written. In any case this Fifth Gospel of St. Paul is in its fully developed stage about contemporary with St. Mark ; and in the crucial issue of the inclusion of the Gentiles—that terrestrial universalism to which we owe the existence of Christianity in the world to-day—St. Paul understood the mind of the Lord better than men like St. Peter who had been with him from the beginning. His ultimate conviction that God wills all men to be saved (if one may quote 1 Tim. 2 : 4) must have been

due to his more acute and better educated mind, which could grasp, by the help of the Spirit of Christ, the full meaning of the earliest records with which he must have been more abundantly supplied than we are. Nor must we suppose that this mature thought of St. Paul was an innovation. Matthew himself as we have already pointed out has preserved a saying of Jesus which resembles it (18 : 14), as a comment on the parable of the Lost Sheep which Luke also relates.

2. *Stages of St. Paul's Thought*

It may be well here to repeat from pages 182–4 the four stages of development in the Pauline eschatology. 1. (*c.* 51) : The original apocalyptic of the epistles to the Thessalonians. 2. (*c.* 55) : The transition in 1 Corinthians. 3. (*c.* 56–7) : The radical change in 2 Corinthians and Romans. 4. (*c.* 61) : The final stage in Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians.

In the *First Period*, St. Paul accepts the current apocalyptic, and says that the Lord will come from heaven "with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus : who shall suffer punishment, æonian destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

To the *Second Period* belongs a great passage from the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which has often been confidently quoted as teaching universalism : but the whole chapter is about the resurrection of the righteous, and does not in reality advance much beyond the First Period. The meaning seems to be

that as all who are in Adam die, so all who are in Christ shall be made alive (1 Cor. 15 : 22–8) ; and in this sense must be read the words following—" Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God. . . . For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet . . . that God may be all in all." But the thought is moving towards the great change when the universality of redemption is realised as complete.

In the *Third Period*, the vision comes in Romans 8 : 19–24 of the full implication of Christ's work ; and the thought is surprisingly modern and evolutionary. The weakness of creation is according to plan (" not of its own will," but " by reason ") with a view to the realisation of the divine scheme. The point is made clear in Moffat's translation :—

Even the creation waits with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. For creation was not rendered futile by its own choice, but by the will of him who thus made it subject, the hope being that creation as well as man would one day be freed from its thraldom to decay and gain the glorious freedom of the children of God. To this day, we know, the entire creation sighs and throbs with pain ; and not only so, but even we ourselves, who have the Spirit as a foretaste of the future, even we sigh to ourselves as we wait for the redemption of the body that means our full sonship. We were saved with this hope in view.

3. *The Final Elimination of Evil*

There can be no doubt that this was St. Paul's reasoned view of the universe in the *Fourth Period*

which brought his life to a close. He had already in the Epistle to the Romans (11 : 32) applied the mercy of God to all, " For God," in Moffat's translation, " has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all." If he seems not to have altogether laid aside that idea of retribution which is too much like the way of " them of old time " to be entirely consistent with the Sermon on the Mount, when he says, " But he that doeth wrong shall receive again for the wrong which he hath done : and there is no respect of persons " (Col. 3 : 25), he does not really go beyond the truth that sin brings its own reward ; and his statement is in direct contradiction to the retribution of hell, which is the punishing of finite wrong by an infinite penalty. St. Paul certainly held that all evil is to be eliminated from the universe, whether by the wicked passing out of existence or by their ultimate conversion is not clear. He speaks indeed of the final conversion of fallen spirits, who are all to be ' reconciled ' from the underworld (clearly they are not good spirits) : " That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, and in the world below ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father " (Phil. 2 : 10–11, see R.V. margin). Perhaps he associated such final conversion with the same idea of the ' harrowing of hell ' that appears in 1 Peter 3 : 19 and 4 : 6 : it is generally held that this preaching to the spirits in Hades is the meaning of Ephesians 4 : 9–10, " Now this, He ascended, what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth ? He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." It would seem therefore that

if he sometimes entertained the idea of the annihilation of the obdurate wicked, such an idea was not final with him, or consistent with his doctrine of the cosmic significance of Christ, as for instance in Colossians, 1 : 19–20 (Moffat's translation, as so often, makes the meaning clear) :—

For it was in him that the divine Fullness willed to settle without limit, and by him it willed to reconcile in his own person all on earth and in the heaven alike, in a peace made by the blood of his cross.

Consistently he maintains this universal power of Christ as the keystone of his theology. Nothing will fall outside his salvation, as in Ephesians 1 : 9–11 (Moffat's translation) :—

He has granted us complete insight and understanding of the open secret of his will, showing us how it was the purpose of his design so to order it in the fulness of the ages that all things in heaven and earth alike should be gathered up in Christ.

Thus to St. Paul the cosmic significance of Christ, both creative and redemptive, was the crown of his theology ; and for him, as for us, the very nature of God is involved in the final reconciliation of all things, the conversion of evil into good. Nor was this a distant dream of some ultimate evacuation of hell, but a tremendous active process already at work. Christ had not come only to save a few penitents, but, as he had said in 2 Corinthians 5 : 19, " God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses."

Often indeed St. Paul draws his arguments from the

ground of his education as a Pharisee and develops his faith in the freedom of the Gospel from the starting point of the Old Testament teaching about sin and the Law : but there was another source for his vision of a whole world redeemed. It was Christ, as he says in the opening of the Epistle to the Ephesians, who had made known to him and to others the mystery of God's will ; and in Christ, the Son of God's love, he says in Colossians (1 : 14–18) :—

We have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins : who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation ; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things have been created through him, and unto him ; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

Nothing could well be further from the idea that God will maintain an eternal torture-house of spiritual failures and unchangeable reprobates and unbaptised babies than this vision of a perfected universe, with all things summed up in Christ and all coming as one body into the measure of the stature of his fullness.

IV. Conclusion

If we turn back now to the former chapter and study the texts which have been used as arguments for hell, their significance comes into a clear light. Our Lord's teaching was in advance of his age, as of ours, and his followers sometimes found it difficult to understand that goodness is a principle which prevails by its own life and does not depend upon punishment. Phrases

therefore about punishment seemed necessary to round off a passage here and there, or welled in half unconsciously from the metaphorical language of apocalyptic. The fact that such phrases are being increasingly demonstrated as accretions not only removes what once seemed to be inconsistencies, but also bears witness to the unique character of the original revelation.

For Christ's work on earth was not to treat pain as 'punishment,' but quite simply to go about relieving it ; and in this he forestalled the results of our physiology and therapeutics. The parallelism between sin and disease upon which he insisted has been completely vindicated by modern science : pain is prophylactic and educative ; without its possibility life would have disappeared, and yet it can be progressively reduced by wisdom and virtue. Pain is not a punishment—it comes sometimes through our virtues,—but sin brings suffering, not as vengeance but as warning ; and if the signal is disregarded, spiritual collapse or physical disease may follow ; and this is not through any vindictive action of the Almighty but because of those natural laws which he has established for our welfare. Therefore Christ " went about doing good," and the good he did was to tell people that their sins were forgiven and that their diseases were cured.

When St. Paul pointed to the saying of the Deuteronomist, " Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord," he was showing the first step upward—that it is wrong for man to seek vengeance, and the warning is still needed. But our Saviour took the final step when he said that the reason why we have to avoid vengeance is because God avoids it ; because he

forgives we must forgive, endlessly, heaping love upon our enemy. Job's comforters voiced the ancient world when they assured him that his sufferings were due to his own sins ; but Jesus said that the fall of the tower of Siloam was not God's way of punishing those who had the misfortune to be standing under it, and showed that there is no vengeance in God, because he makes the sun to rise and the rain to fall upon just and unjust alike.

It is in fact not true that every sin has to be punished by some pain because God is ' just,' or that sins not paid for in this life must be paid for in the next. Sins cannot be dealt with by retribution, but by ' change of mind ' and forgiveness, as Jesus dealt with them, avoiding the very mention of sin or punishment or vengeance.

Thus did Jesus teach, by action as well as by word, the unstained fatherhood of God. It is because of him that we are able to say that God is entirely Love, putting all else aside ; for God is " not the law-giver, not the judge ; he does not get angry nor does he punish, but he is simply the incarnate, redemptive, and sanctifying love." [1] God's power and his justice are indeed contained in his love : he cannot be vindictive or capricious, and he cannot change, but is always love itself.

It is perhaps less difficult for us now to realise this revelation of Christ because we have all grown more towards him, and because of the increased sense of Value which philosophy is bringing into religious thought. Most of all, it may be, is the idea of God as perfect love made more explicable by our modern

[1] A. Harnack, *Marcion*, Leipzig, 1921, p. 19.

stress on the divine immanence. For God is greater than we once imagined, or than we are apt to think when we do not resist the pull of our childhood ideas : he is not only transcendent, he is not merely ' a Spirit,' as the Authorised Version translates, but " God is spirit," indwelling as the creative urge in all life, and indwelling in the very heart of man, so that our bodies are, as St. Paul saw long ago, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Thus human suffering is not something hurled down upon man from an outraged Olympus, but a process in which God shares. In some way that we cannot conceive he must be a participator in all our sorrows as in all our joys ; and the Cross becomes the symbol, not of a sacrifice made to propitiate an angry God, but of Divinity sharing the suffering, bearing the sins, and leading the self-sacrifice of man.

We have tried to study in this little book how the opposite conception was gradually fixed upon the minds of Christians, till the Legend of Hell in all its wickedness nearly overwhelmed the Gospel ; and we have described the revolt against that legend. To-day the position has changed. It is no longer necessary to marshal arguments :—

> The wish, that of the living whole
> No life may fail beyond the grave,
> Derives it not from what we have
> The likest God within the soul ?

The mastering power of the truth, recognised in the last century by the ablest men, of whom Tennyson is representative, is now felt almost instinctively ; and universalism is becoming universal. What principally remains to be done is to clear the name of Jesus Christ

from association with the abominable doctrines which were gradually fastened upon his good news.

He came indeed as the embodiment of the divine love ; and in his own person he exhibited that love, not as inflicting punishment but as innocently enduring it : he pictured God, no longer as a mere king, still less as a capricious and vindictive sultan, but as a father, loving all his children ; and in the story of the Prodigal Son he showed what sort of a father he had in mind. His teaching was of mercy and forgiveness ; he bade men harbour no thoughts of vengeance or retribution, but forgive utterly because that is the way God forgives : he destroyed the terrors of the Law, and he saw God as one who is always seeking the hearts of erring men that he may bring them to health. Rarely had tenderness been combined with great power in the ancient world : he combined them as never before ; and it is his infinite kindness that has drawn all men to him and has led the hesitating world to a moral conception of God.

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